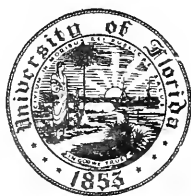


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JUDAISM

JUDAISM

Profile OF A Faith



B Y

BEN ZION BOKSER



New York : Alfred A. Knopf

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FIRST EDITION

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T O

Miriam Ruth and Baruch Micah

WHO I HOPE WILL TURN

MY THOUGHTS INTO THREADS

FOR A NEW WEAVING

THE MIND IS BUT A TINY FLAME

*The mind is but a tiny flame
To lift the dark that veils God's name.
His work is all that mortals see,
The tokens of His sovereignty.*

*Our wisdom is to know our place
Within the pattern of His grace,
To look upon His works in awe,
To probe the wonders of His law.*

*To be the bearers of His light
For all who are astray in night,
To build His kingdom here on earth,
That righteousness may come to birth.*

*His kingdom will arise in time
As men pursue their upward climb,
And bend their will His will to learn,
And loving Him His love return.*

Introduction

THIS BOOK is an attempt to define the basic concepts of Judaism, which reflect the normative flow of the Jewish religious tradition. It is *an* interpretation of Judaism, the testimony, in other words, of one who writes from a given perspective of thought and experience. A claim to dogmatic authority is alien to the spirit of Judaism, which recognizes the legitimacy of diverse interpretations of God's word no less than of man's. Even when interpretations clash sharply, Judaism bids us remember that in each is embodied "the words of the living God."

Indeed, this is the condition which faces all communities held together by a common faith. Only when considered in their utmost generality can there be a consensus on the underlying concepts involved in such a faith. The moment we attempt to refine those concepts, differentiation will set in. The unity which binds us together is in the ultimate ground of our life and thought, but it always unfolds into diverse proliferations. Unity flows into diversity, and diversity is harmonized by a return to underlying unity.

This book is intended primarily for the layman, although it is hoped that the scholar also may find something of interest

Introduction

in its various discussions. Basic themes in this work are generally documented by reference to the classic writings of Judaism, as well as to relevant discussions of modern writers. But teachings which are generally well known are not documented. For the sake of greater simplicity, references to the classics, Biblical as well as rabbinic, are integrated with the text, while other writers are cited in footnotes. Biblical passages were translated anew from the original Hebrew and they may sometimes sound somewhat strange to one accustomed to the standard English translations of the Bible. All transliterations of Hebrew terms follow the system employed in the publications of the United Synagogue of America, with one simplification: the Hebrew *het* is rendered by *h* rather than *ḥ*. The dotted *h* is an unfamiliar symbol to most readers.

In preparing the present work, I drew on previously published material appearing in my edition and translation of *The Prayer Book* (Weekday, Sabbath, and Festival) and *The High Holy Day Prayer Book*, both published by the Hebrew Publishing Company; *The Wisdom of the Talmud*, published by the Philosophical Library; *The Ethic of Power*, edited by Harold D. Lasswell and Harlan Cleveland and published by the Conference on Science, Philosophy and Religion; *The Journal of Religious Thought*, published by the School of Religion of Howard University; and *Jewish Heritage*, published by the B'nai B'rith Commission on Adult Education. I am grateful to these publishers for their kind cooperation.

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BEN ZION BOKSER

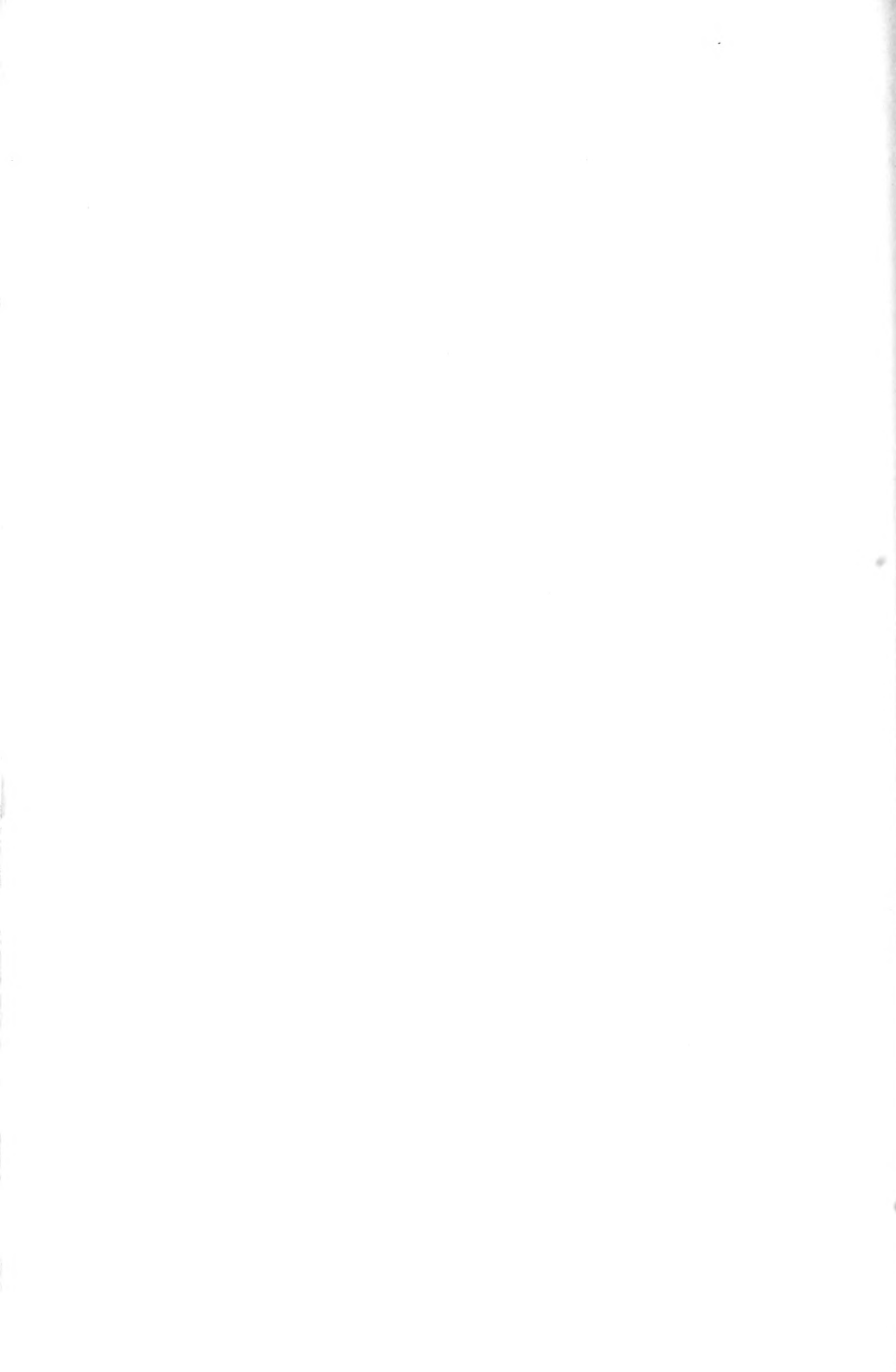
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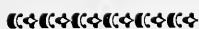
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JUDAISM



I



The Renewal of Religion

RELIGION has been denounced, and it has been persecuted, but it is still very much with us. From lands overrun by Communism it is persistently reported that in many cases, after decades of indoctrination in atheism, religious feelings remain deep among the people. From the free world we have similar testimony. Whoever has sought to understand the dominant mood of man in our time testifies to a growing interest in religion. People who have been raised on the notion that religion is an outgrown mythology of the primitive mind have often shown a surprising concern with religious questions, and they ponder these questions in an effort to define their own way in the world.

There may be laxity in conforming to religious practices, but there is a widespread concern with religious teachings in all strata of society. The Bible remains the world's greatest best seller; religious writers like Niebuhr, Tillich, Buber, Heschel, and a host of others are followed with the utmost re-

spect in intellectual circles. A popular preacher, Norman Vincent Peale, is among the most widely listened to and read commentators on life anywhere in the land. Billy Graham's crusades for old-fashioned Protestantism have drawn millions. The Witnesses of Jehovah have repeatedly brought together tens of thousands to listen to their gospel. Churches and synagogues are being built wherever the urban frontier pushes forward; the numbers enrolled in religious schools are constantly increasing; among the questions which reflective people are asking everywhere are questions which have to do with religion.

Why is religion of such profound concern to people? What is there about the nature of man which conditions him continually to grapple with problems for which there can be no definitive solutions, to ponder questions for which there are no incontestable answers? Why does man persist in the preoccupation with the unknown, at least by the normal canons of knowing, which is the province of religion?

Man differs from all creatures below him by, among other things, his need to elaborate through reflection the values by which he is to live. All other creatures have their value systems built in, as part of their structure of instincts that guide them through every exigency of their life. The roots of the tree grow downward, and they suck up from the earth whatever nutritive substances the tree requires for its life. The animal goes through far more complex operations, but with the same "involuntary" quality. The beaver builds a dam; the ant "sacrifices" for the well-being of the ant community; the bee will "submit" to immolation for the sake of her race; the dove remains "faithful" to her mate. The skills and the values by which life is maintained on the subhuman level are possessed by each through the law written into the texture of its being.

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Man, too, is provided with a structure of instincts which cover much of his life. He knows to cry in the face of pain. He knows to inhale and to exhale. He knows from the very moment of birth to accept the agreeable and to reject the disagreeable. But with man there enters something new into existence; there begins the realm of the voluntary and the reflective. The law of his being leaves much in his life open, to be attained through reflection, to be possessed through free choice, to be transmitted through culture. The need for culture, for a realm of skills and values won through free grappling with one's self and one's environment, is a purely human need. Religion is part of our culture, and it embraces a realm most cogent for the human spirit as it moves toward self-consciousness; it is the realm of values.

Values represent the meaning which we attach to things. It fashions a scale of importance for the things we do and the things we possess. Former Vice-President Richard Nixon, in his encounter with Premier Nikita Khrushchev in Moscow, invited the Russians to compete with America in making refrigerators. He used the refrigerator, of course, as a symbol. He meant that the two systems should submit themselves to the world for judgment on the basis of which of them provides the greater material comfort for people. Material comfort is surely of value, but one may well ask: Is this the highest criterion by which to judge a society? Such questions are in the province of religion. Religion asks questions not only about objects in our environment but about man himself. Of what value, of what meaning, is his own life? What significance shall he attach to the tensions stirring his own nature, the yearning for the unknown, the feeling of unworthiness which sometimes possesses him and drives him almost to despair? Of what value, of what meaning, is the total drama

of existence, of which the human episode is only a part?

The sense of value is the basic concern of man. Amidst the endless labors which command his energies the quest for values is the core of motivation, the animating spring from which all action flows. A. N. Whitehead said: "The ultimate motive power, alike in science, in morality and in religion, is the sense of value, the sense of importance. It takes the various forms of wonder, of curiosity, of reverence, of worship, of tumultuous desire for merging personality in something beyond itself. The sense of value imposes on life incredible labors, and apart from it, life sinks back into the passivity of lower types."¹

Values are the concern of other provinces of culture. In the arts they are enshrined in aesthetic forms. In government the most basic and fundamental of our values, such as justice and freedom are guaranteed by law. But it is in religion that our values are sought and cultivated as a primary objective. And it is in religion, too, that the quest for values is carried to its ultimate frontier; it is here that the ultimate questions are asked about man and the meaning of his life on earth.

Religion anchors our values by relating them not to the capricious play of purely human valuations, but to an objective source. It anchors them in the will of God, as disclosed in the goal underlying all existence. The pursuit of values is thus given a powerful incentive. It is the means of conforming to the rhythm of all life in the universe. It is the means of furthering God's purpose, toward which all creation strives. It is the condition necessary toward discovering meaning and purpose in our own being.

Religion ponders the ultimate questions concerning man's

¹ A. N. Whitehead: *Aims of Education and Other Essays* (New York: The Macmillan Company; 1959), pp. 62-3.

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life on earth, and, by reason—and by a technique of knowing wholly its own, revelation—it seeks to formulate answers. But it does more. It offers a pattern of action by which inner tensions may be reduced through emotional release. For every major crisis in life—birth, puberty, marriage, bereavement—it offers a body of rituals through which we may respond meaningfully to the crisis. Every crisis in life is related to a crisis in our value system, either positively or negatively. We are either stirred to exaltation because our values are vindicated, or we are depressed because they are threatened. This feeling, whether it be exaltation or depression, is registered as a tenseness of emotion, and the availability of a channel for release is a vital asset for life. Religion is one such asset because it serves as a channel through which our emotions may flow, reducing our tenseness and offering us, before the vicissitudes of experience, a means of balance against the extremes of response.

The questions asked by religion address themselves to a *permanent* need in human nature. But there are occasions when this need is submerged by other preoccupations. The United States was long preoccupied with the expanding frontier of its economy, with the raising of the standard of living through the continued production and distribution of goods and services. The immigrants who came here from the Old World were caught up by this fever of concentration on economics; they often mobilized their total strength merely to adjust to the environment, to master the rudiments of becoming Americanized, and to get ahead on the ladder of economic development. But is economic expansion enough to inspire man's efforts in the world? Is there anything beyond affluence? The children and grandchildren of yesterday's pio-

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neers have inherited the advantages won for them by their ancestors. But now they are asking ultimate questions, questions their ancestors were too busy to ask.

Marxism was another factor which diverted people from religion. Marxism mobilized the best energies of more than one generation to the task of creating the social revolution. The task was presented in ultimate terms, as the highest good which a man was called on to pursue. The revolution was to usher in a classless society, a world of justice for all men and all nations. It was presented as the fulfillment of the very purpose of history. Marxism has been called a "secular" religion, secular in the sense that it attacked the classic religions but had within itself the pretensions of a religion. It pretended to give man a self-sufficient value system. It gave him a goal to live and die for, and it assured him that in pursuing this goal he was riding the wave of the future. We have seen the Marxist revolutions in action, and the realities of the world have exposed them too as a false reed for man to lean on. The perversion of the state under Marxism into an apparatus of oppression has clearly shown that its gift to man is not ultimate justice and freedom, but rather another variety of man's domination of man. The days of Marxist messianism have long been over, and great are the numbers of the disenchanted who have come to realize that Marxism had given them a false conception of man and his destiny.

Marxism exerted a profound influence on our culture. Its values insinuated themselves into circles that were nominally non-Marxist and even anti-Marxist. The basic teachings of Marxism, the economic interpretation of history, the salvational idealization of the classless society, the disdain for religion as "otherworldly" and a hindrance to social progress—these conceptions penetrated widely into the community of

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scholarship and the arts. The deflation of the Marxist dream has affected these circles too. It has exposed a dimension of man not covered by his economic interests. It has revealed needs that cannot be met through a rearrangement of the economic realities in society. The soil has been prepared for a return to other questions and other issues, those which lead man to religion.

The enchantment with Marxism was the vogue at one time among certain Jewish intellectuals. As a minority on the defensive, some Jews found the promise of social liberation of great appeal. The concern with social justice inherited from their own past made Jews responsive to every appeal for the redress of social abuses, for the establishment of a more equitable social order. The disenchanting realities of Marxism in action have therefore been felt with especial keenness in the Jewish community. Communism has fought the State of Israel, which has saved the remnant of Jewry and given new hope to the Jewish people. It has consistently supported the Arab cause. Indeed it has used its vast influence to block a solution of the outstanding issues between Israel and her Arab neighbors. It has done this in pursuit not of justice, but of centers of power. And at home, the Soviet Union has adopted a policy of anti-Semitism, cynically betraying every pretension once made for the equality and freedom of national minorities. Indeed, did not the Soviet Union, when it suited her national interests, make a pact with the devil himself, with Hitler's *Reich*? Communism is a "god that failed," to use the title of a recent book by a group of disillusioned Marxists.

Modern science was still another force which tended to divert some men from religion. The remarkable developments in modern science dazzled men and led them to feel that here at last was the magic treasure that would satisfy their

keenest needs. Theoretical science flooded the world with the light of new truth and removed obscurities in which men had lived for countless centuries. Applied science founded a technology that gave men unprecedented power to control their environment. Science stood as the knight in shining armor who would lead men to the kingdom of their dreams. But science too has proven to be a false messiah. Its achievements are indeed remarkable, and science has much to offer toward the building of an ideal world. But in itself it does not hold the keys to our Utopia.

The mystery of the world remains as much of a mystery as ever. We have extended the area on which the beam of light falls, but by that very light we can see even more clearly the realm beyond, the mystery of the unknown. Indeed science has reached a point where even what we thought we knew emerges as set in mysteries without end. We are now told that matter and energy are both interchangeable, that the ultimate realities of the physical world are themselves immaterial; they are without spatial extension and cannot be envisioned in any particularity of form. As to the extension of man's control of the environment, it has given us a new insecurity. By the blazing lights of the bombs that fell on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, we glimpsed a man-made hell into which by the aid of science we might some day dispatch our entire world.

It is natural that man should now turn elsewhere for the way to order his life with wisdom and goodness and love. For what is a world without goodness and love? Given these we can survive under the most abject primitivism. Without these, a civilization, no matter how technically imposing, is bound to perish.

Yet another force that often diverted men from religion was nationalism. The longing of nations for identity and free-

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dom was a positive development in history. But the love for the nation was often absolutized, and service to it was invested with a quality of ultimate value. The nation became in effect an idol, and it looked with jealousy on other loyalties, including the loyalty to a religion that transcended this national community. The idolization of the political community is well expressed in the slogan which decorates the statue of Ghana's President Nkrumah: "Attain you the political kingdom and all other kingdoms will be granted you." It is when the political kingdom is attained that men discover that there is something more to life than nationalism to which men must relate themselves.

The nationalist diversion from religion was felt in the Jewish community through the impact of the Zionist movement. The task of "auto-emancipation," as Leon Pinsker called it, of freeing ourselves from the static conditions of Jewish existence in the ghettos which had been solidified by the weight of centuries, was profoundly onerous. It represented a social revolution of the first magnitude. Equally onerous was the labor of pioneering in Palestine. The concern with ultimate questions appeared to the men engaged in these labors as a digression from the main course life was to take. But as the tasks of pioneering receded, and Zionism moved to the level of fulfillment, the human spirit once again came into its own, and the old wonder has returned.

Many of the pioneering settlements, the early *Kibbutzim*, were begun in a setting that called for the displacement of religion by the pioneering ideal, by the ideal of national redemption. The children of those pioneers are now reclaiming the ground their parents abandoned. It is instructive in this connection to read two volumes of letters written by the second generation of *Kibbutzniks*. The two authors, Rafi Maltz

and Hillel Lavi, were born in the *Kibbutz En Harod* and were raised in the typical nonreligious, if not antireligious, climate of pioneering Labor Zionism. Both died in the Israeli War of Independence, and the *Kibbutz* published these volumes as a memorial to them. What is striking in both these volumes is a rebellion against the secular culture of the *Kibbutz* as shallow and spiritually sterile, and a profound yearning for religious faith. Rafi Maltz reflects this hunger for a religious faith in a very moving letter to his girl friend, taking issue with her pet theory that religion is obsolete and without genuine interest to a really cultured man. After some extended argumentation Rafi writes: "What is faith? I am not now concerned about organized religion and its commandments, although here too there is something vast, immense, a profound understanding of life . . . but I speak of faith itself. Whence does it arise? Man stands before a mystery which he cannot resolve. What is creation all about? This is a question concerning the very essence of the universe and man's place in it. Is there a goal, a purpose to the world? Is it rooted on an ethical foundation? A man of faith can indeed be a cultured person, and cultured men, many of them, indeed the greatest among them, are people of faith."²

We have described religion as the realm of values, but it is important to bear in mind that religions differ in their value systems. Not all religions attach the same significance to the same things. Although all religions tend to ask the same questions, their answers are not always the same. Adolf Eichmann, on taking the oath as a witness in his self-defense at the court in Jerusalem where he was tried for his crimes against the Jews and against humanity, declared himself as a believer

² Rafi Maltz: *Bi-Yekod* (En Harod: Ha-Kibbutz Ha-Meuhad; 1949), pp. 67 f.

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in God. What kind of a God did he believe in? The God believed in by an evil man may indeed reinforce his tendency to evil. A person must have a value system, but value systems can differ profoundly and offer man the chart by which to build a kingdom of righteousness or the dark dungeon of a hell on earth.

Judaism has exercised a profound influence on the history of civilization not because it has asked eternal questions, but because of the spirit in which it has answered or sought to answer those questions. Judaism accepts this world in which man finds himself. It acclaims it as the embodiment of value. Each week on the Sabbath, it celebrates this world as a divine creation. It summons man to live in the world, to concern himself with things mundane, to subdue nature to man's purposes, to establish an organized society, to marry, to raise a family. But it reminds man that these things are not his final end, that the physical is a base on which to build the spiritual. It summons man to seek higher values in the pursuit of truth, in deeds of loving-kindness, in the promotion of justice and peace. It acknowledges that much of mundane life is often ugly and perverse and a travesty upon human hopes. But it insists that these conditions prevail because of man's immaturity, that as he grows in wisdom he will be able to direct his world and his own life toward a greater approximation of his ideal. It assures man that beyond the present lies not a repetition of the follies that exasperate us, but a fulfillment, a golden age of righteousness, the messianic age of universal justice, freedom, and peace.

Judaism assures man that the emergence of a human type that will know truth and practice mercy and love is part of the unfolding plan which is at work throughout the drama of existence. Amidst the diversity and apparent chaos which is

the flow of events when viewed with the naked eye, Judaism insists that there is order and underlying unity. Behind the flux of events it sees at work a beneficent Creator. Man's own destiny is to be a participant in this process, to be a co-worker with this beneficent Creator in the realization of the design toward which all things are directed. Affirmed in doctrine, elaborated and expressed in ritual, translated into a code of behavior, this is Judaism's basic answer to the riddle of existence. It makes many demands on man, but it gives him something precious in return—a sense of the meaningfulness of his existence.

Much of what Judaism has to say concerning the riddle of existence has reached the Western world via Christianity. Christianity itself is one of the Jewish contributions to civilization. It is in many respects a Jewish sect. It took form within the Jewish household of faith, and its answers are answers it learned when it was still part of the mainstream of Jewish vision and life. But Christianity has obscured the religious humanism represented by Judaism through placing at the center of its value system the belief in the divinity and messiahship of Jesus and by making salvation dependent on this faith rather than on the moral and spiritual quality of one's life. Christianity is of course divided into a variety of sects, and they differ in their interpretation of the role of Jesus in the scheme of salvation. They grow in closeness to Judaism to the extent that they recede from the absolutization of Jesus and center their faith on the direct relationship with God and on the primacy of the moral deed as the means of serving Him.

Judaism offers its value system to every man, but to the Jew it offers something more. It offers him the sense of privilege in being the bearer of a tradition which has grappled bravely with the deepest issues that have agitated the human heart and

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which has charted the answers by which a man can live meaningfully in the face of whatever storms may rage in the world.

Dr. O. Hobart Mowrer, Research Professor of Psychology at the University of Illinois, in a recent paper on "Psychiatry and Religion,"³ explained modern man's need of religious confrontation in these words: "Once more we are coming to perceive man as pre-eminently a social creature, whose greatest and most devastating anguish is experienced not in physical pain or biological deprivation, but when he feels alienated, disgraced, guilty, debased as a person. And the thrust of much current therapeutic effort is in the direction of trying to help such individuals recover their sociality, relatedness, community, identity. Here surely is a promising meeting ground for psychology, psychiatry, and sociology and for much that is common to both classical Judaism and authentic Christianity."

The reappraisal of religion is an ongoing concern in each religious community. The shattering developments in modern life, in the realm of ideas as in patterns of action, will not leave our religious traditions unaffected. Out of this appraisal, religion will emerge with renewed force and increasingly recommend itself to men sensitive to the need of a stable center of values in a world of shifting phenomena. As the noted American philosopher A. N. Whitehead has acknowledged: "It [religion] is the one element in human experience which persistently shows an upward trend. It fades and then recurs. But when it renews its force, it recurs with an added richness and purity of content. . . . Apart from it, human life is a flash of occasional enjoyments lightening up a mass of pain and misery, a bagatelle of transient experience."⁴

³ *Atlantic Monthly*, July 1961, p. 89.

⁴ A. N. Whitehead: *Science and the Modern World* (New York: Mentor Books; 1925), pp. 191 f.



II



What Is Judaism?

WHAT is Judaism? What are its teachings? Do they remain valid for modern man? What practices does it demand of its adherents? Will these practices help in the quest for a good life, to build a world of justice, freedom, and peace?

Judaism came into the world when man was still young, when his mind was still steeped in primitivism. The earliest struggles of Judaism were to wean man away from his primitive habits of life and thought. Judaism may be said to begin with the covenant at Sinai, and this covenant includes the most solemn admonition against primitive religion (Exodus 20:3, 4, 5): "You shall have no other gods before Me. You shall not make for yourself a graven image, nor any manner of likeness, of anything that is in the heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them, nor serve them, for I the Lord your God am a jealous God. . . ."

Lawgivers, prophets, and sages of the people of Israel often

What Is Judaism?

returned to this theme, exhorting their adherents to shun the various cults which flourished in antiquity, and seeking by every pedagogic device at their disposal to extirpate the vestiges of primitive religious practices which continued to have a hold on the people. We shall gain a better understanding of this passion in early Judaism by considering the nature of primitive religion. Much that became permanent in Jewish thought and practice took shape in those ancient struggles against man's primitive inheritance.

Religion began when man became aware that certain elements in his environment were supremely important to him, and he responded to this awareness with homage and adoration. Sometimes it was the objects themselves which received his adoration, such as the sun and the moon, or the trees that formed an oasis which sheltered him from the hot sun, or the spring from which flowed the waters that quenched his thirst and the thirst of the other creatures of his household and of the earth that grew his food. More often he adored an invisible spirit that was the reality behind the reality of the object he cherished. The recognition of spirits behind the phenomena of the visible world led to the belief in many separate powers or gods.

The world inhabited by primitive people was a splintered world, a fragmentary world. They did not see that life has a unity; they only saw its variety. They felt different pressures in their own hearts; they saw seemingly contradictory phenomena in the world about them. They saw death and birth, darkness and light, hostility and compassion. They saw different kinds of beasts roaming the woods; they saw different varieties of vegetation. They were often overwhelmed by thunder and lightning; they were frightened by storms and comforted by the calm which followed them. They were

startled by strange dreams in the night. They saw, moreover, that the world was divided into different cities, different tribes, each a stranger and an enemy of the other. It was natural for them, therefore, to split the reality behind the visible world into many separate and unrelated powers.

Each phenomenon in the visible world, so primitive people felt, was controlled by a separate power or god. There was a god of the rain and of the wind, a god who drew people to fight, a god who caused men and women to love each other, a god of laughter and of grief. Each city had its own god and so did each tribe. The thieves of Rome had a god of their own whom they cultivated and whom they credited with the success of their operations.

The names of our months remind us how widespread polytheism was at one time. January derives from *Janus*, a Roman god of the doorway, who was also thought of as a god of beginnings. February derives from *februa*, a Roman name for a ritual in honor of the god of fertility, which occurred on February 15th. March derives from the Roman god *Mars*, the god of war. Other months bear similar allusions.

How did man relate himself to these powers who controlled the visible world? Various rituals were created depending on the particular deity that was being cultivated and on the inventiveness and imagination of the people involved. But two general characteristics stand out. The people reflected in their rituals the behavior of their gods. The god of the vine, Dionysus, was worshipped in orgies in which his worshippers became intoxicated. The god of fertility was worshipped in the sexual union between a male and a female, and his temples became centers of prostitution indulged in under the sponsorship of religion. The gods of each city, of each tribe, were

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served in a fierce loyalty to that city or tribe and in a corresponding hostility to all other cities or tribes.

There were thoughtful men in the pagan world who saw the folly of polytheism. The Greek philosophers certainly saw the naïveté of the tales about the gods, the absurdity of the actions ascribed to them, and the evil for human conduct in making such gods the ideal for men to emulate. The Athenians charged that Socrates openly scoffed at these gods, and he was forced to die by drinking the hemlock. The charges against him were that he had corrupted the youth by teaching them to disbelieve in the gods of their city. For the most part the philosophers kept their ideas to themselves. They were aloof from the popular religion, but they did not show their people an alternative.

There was an important variation in paganism introduced by Zoroaster, who appeared in Persia about 1000 B.C.E. and taught a doctrine of dualism. The religion of Zoroaster simplified the structure of existence by reducing the powers governing the world to two. There was operative in the universe a god of light, Ahura Mazda, and all that is good in existence was the effect of his actions. Opposed to him was Angra Mainyu, the god of darkness and the source of all evil in the world. Zoroaster urged all creatures to rally to the god of light and fight with him against the god of darkness, for the greater ascendancy of good in the world. But for thoughtful men this split in existence in a dualistic philosophy was extremely disturbing. Is darkness really evil? Is not night part of a unified pattern of existence, and does it not in its own way serve beneficently the cause of human existence? Indeed, all creatures, plants, and animals, no less than humans, are restored in the dark hours of night. The future of man demanded a faith that

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would preserve the unity of existence. Evil was real and had to be accounted for, but not at the expense of the unity of existence.

The tribes which were fused to form the Jewish people went through a varied religious development. But when we meet them in history their faith had attained its maturing. This faith is expressed in the Bible, and though the books of the Bible record a span of many centuries and reflect many variations of religious and moral emphasis, the underlying theme of all Biblical writing is the struggle against the divisiveness of paganism. From its inception Judaism was engaged in a relentless protest against polytheism and dualism. Jewish tradition pictures King Nimrod as charging Abraham with disloyalty to his people's gods. The Romans accused the Jews as being atheists; they appeared so to them because they scoffed at the Roman gods and ridiculed the rites by which they were worshipped.

Jewish teachers saw life as a unity. Its variety expressed for them the different phases of that unity, the way the different movements and tonal qualities of a symphony are integrated by a common theme to make them one. Some elements of life appeared contradictory, but the contradictions were only on the surface. Seen more deeply, the contradictions were resolved in a higher harmony. There was, therefore, only one Power who controls the visible world. And Jewish teachers regarded this Power as above the rest of nature, bound by no laws other than His own will. He was the Creator and Sovereign Ruler over all existence.

The Biblical name for this one Power who controls the visible world is *YHVH*. It means, according to many contemporary scholars, "He who engenders being" or "He who begets existence." It is a mark of the awe in which God's name

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is held that Jews, by tradition, do not pronounce God's name. Wherever *YHVH* occurs, tradition ordains that it be read *Adonai*, which means *Lord*.

There were two important consequences which followed from the belief in one God. One is the rationality of existence. The belief in the unity of life led to the orderly exploration of all existence; it led to the vision of an order of nature governed by a basic law or body of principles. Polytheism implies a world of unrelated phenomena, which is chaos; monotheism implies order and harmony, which we can probe by means of reason, through clinical observation and experimentation and through the tools fashioned by science, from a test tube to a space flight.

The second major consequence which follows from the belief in one God is the morality of existence. If life is a unity, an integrated whole, then everything has value because it is part of the whole, just as every dot, every shade of color, in a design is important and has value. Man as part of that unity, moreover, has a kinship with everything else in existence. He has a kinship, above all, with his fellow human beings. Misunderstanding may produce temporary hostility between individuals or nations, but this is like the hostility within a family; it is a mark of immaturity which people outgrow. In monotheism man owes respect to every part of creation, but especially to his fellow man, whom he must treat as a brother and love him as himself.

Jewish teachers through the ages developed the vast implications of this faith in the unity of God, and it remains the cornerstone of Judaism. It is summed up in the *Shema*, which is the great affirmation of the faith of the Jew: "Hear, O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is one."

Judaism is a manifold tradition consisting of a vast literature,

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many institutions, rites, disciplines, laws. But everything derives from the belief in one God, which is the core of its being. The belief in one God is the foundation on which all else in Judaism rests, and it is the chief contribution of Judaism to man's spiritual development.



III



The Ground to Believe

How do we know that God exists? Where do we find the evidence that behind the world of concrete things, behind the unfolding drama of events moving from cause to effect, there is at work a Supreme Being who directs life to some meaningful destiny? Wherever we turn we see the world, its variety, its vastness, its mysterious being. But God we do not see.

There is a trend in modern religious thought which has despaired of a rational approach to religion. Imprisoned as we are in a world of finitude, with imperfect instruments of perception and thought to lean on, how can a mortal transcend himself and his world, to know the infinite God? God must be sought, according to this view, by one way only—by a “leap of faith.” This view is represented by the contemporary religious movement known as existentialism. It has many fore-runners in Jewish tradition. There were many deeply learned and pious teachers in Judaism, especially in the medieval pe-

riod, who were distrustful of reason, who counseled only one way, the way of tradition, the way of faith.

There is a sense in which the religious life, as indeed all life, rests on an act of faith. Life begins with a commitment of the heart. We can always reason with reason; every argument leaves some room for counter-argument. There has to be a predisposition of the heart to respond to thought, or the act of thought, no matter how rigorously pursued, will fail to persuade us.

It is true, too, that our knowledge halts at many points, while the necessities of life compel us to proceed into the uncharted zone, with an intuitive trust alone to steer us the rest of the way. How does a reformer know that the world will respond to his cause, that his vision is capable of realization? How does a scientist know that a cure for cancer exists and he is not wasting his time on a quest for something which must necessarily elude him? We walk the ground of life, continually trusting our steps in directions not altogether defined. An inner light shines in the human heart and it forms a path on which man trusts himself during much of his time on earth.

We can know only a part, but a rational man is eager to know the part which is knowable. Men have stumbled into gross error and believed in all kinds of false and pernicious doctrines when the evidence was at hand to enlighten them. They ignored the evidence, living instead by a blind faith. Faith must often take over where knowledge halts, but faith is not a substitute for knowledge. The knowledge of God is fated to remain fragmentary and deficient, but a part can be known, and what can be known should be cultivated. Scripture (I Chronicles 28:9) quotes King David as admonishing his son Solomon: "Know the God of your father and serve Him." Jewish thinkers who favored the rational study of re-

ligion took this to mean that we cannot be content with a religion based on faith alone; we must seek to *know* God rationally. The Biblical commentary *Metzudat David* phrases it thus: "Search with your reason to *know* God; where your reason proves inadequate, do not abandon Him, but depend on tradition, for He is the God of your fathers."

The belief in the existence of God implies that the universe is permeated with rationality and is directed toward the attainment of beneficent goals. Those teachers of Judaism who sought a rational faith turned, therefore, to the facts of existence to confirm their belief in God; they saw the tokens of God's presence in the orderliness, the rationality, and the purposefulness of the universe. For us the facts of existence are unraveled through the work of science, and the man in quest of a rational faith must accordingly turn to the scientist to aid him in his endeavor. He must ponder the universe as it emerges from the teachings of contemporary science, to find the clues that will point to the Creator who is the source of its being.

Long ago the Psalmist (Psalms 19:2) exclaimed: "The heavens declare the glory of God and the sky proclaims His handiwork." The science of astronomy has made us more conscious of the awesomeness and majesty written in the heavens. Modern astronomers have estimated that there are at least twenty thousand million stars in the Milky Way alone. And at least two hundred million galaxies like the Milky Way are believed to roam the stupendous distances of cosmic space. These vast bodies, moreover, are endlessly in motion, at fantastic speeds and with precision and never-failing regularity. Our earth moves at 72,000 miles an hour around the sun, and the sun and its retinue of planets move at 1,000,000 miles an hour around the galaxy. It will take our galaxy over

200,000,000 years to complete one revolution on its own axis.

Every unit of life, even the smallest, is a marvel of structure and design. The nerve cells of our brain weigh in aggregate no more than half an ounce, but there are nine thousand million of them. Every one of these cells is a complex unit of life somewhat like a busy telephone exchange conveying messages from one part of the body to the other. We have twenty-five billion oxygen-carrying red blood corpuscles in our bodies, and if they were spread out in a sheet they would occupy 3,300 square miles.

Throughout this stupendous universe with its numberless beings there reigns distinctiveness and individuality. Every insect, every flower, even every flake of snow, when seen under the microscope, shows individuality of design. Every object in the world, including the earth itself, vibrates with a distinctive tone. Every creature's ear form, the prints of his finger, are wholly his own; they have not been duplicated by any creature in the same species, and they never will be. Every one of them is a wondrous triumph of perfection in form and function.

The universe reveals not only rationality and orderliness; it also reveals a concern for values. In some cases the values sought are those basic to the survival of the organism, but in others they extend to what we call the moral and the aesthetic.

Every creature is endowed with astonishing resourcefulness for the cultivation of its life. A humble amoeba sends forth its strands of protoplasm to draw to itself certain substances which will help it sustain its life, but it pulls back from other substances. Who taught the birds to fly south when the cold weather sets in? Who taught the squirrel to store its nuts during the summer so as to be supplied with food for

the austere days of winter? Who taught the beaver to build dams? Why does a seed always send its roots downward to the earth from which it will suck up the substance that will nourish it and enable it to grow into a plant? Who taught the plant to turn toward the sun? Who taught the child to cry when it is in want, and why does the mother drop every preoccupation to attend to the child's want? Where did we get the mind to think, the heart to feel? Where did we get the sense of beauty, the passion for goodness and truth? And how account for the yearning we call love which bids us transcend our separate existence and unite ourselves with other beings, to form a family, a nation, a world community?

Moreover, according to science, this wondrous world has evolved by slow stages, from the crude to the more refined, from the simple to the complex, and the evolution is still proceeding toward greater perfection and refinement. If there were nothing but natural law operative in the world, grinding out its effects without regard to values, then evolution, as we know it, would have been impossible. If we began, let us say, with the amoeba, then by the law of nature the amoeba would have multiplied and filled the world with its species. Why were the boundaries of the species crossed? Why does the push continue ever upward toward a goal which places its accent on the continued refinement and perfection of life? Contemplating all these marvels one is moved to say: A mighty hand is at work to direct this vast enterprise toward a wise and beneficent purpose.

The inference drawn from the design exemplified in the universe has sometimes been questioned because what looks like design is on occasion produced by accident rather than by intelligent, purposive action. The shifting clouds often write all kinds of patterns in the sky. A protruding rock on

top of Profile Mountain in New Hampshire bears the face of an old man, wrought not by intelligently directed hands but by the accidental play of natural forces. It stands as a freak of nature to which tourists come each year from many parts of the country to gaze at in wonderment. But these "freaks of nature" occur in a chaotic context, and they are the rarest exceptions.

An ape banging on the typewriter may produce an occasional syllable or word through a chance combination of letters, but it is inconceivable that he will produce a poem. A poem implies a poet with a vision, with a desire to express some discovery of truth or beauty. The accidental fall of ink-spots on a roll of paper would produce a smudge, not a text communicating a message. The chances of accidental causation become increasingly more remote as the element of design grows in complexity and comprehensiveness.

It is the all-pervasiveness of the design at work in the universe, it is the fact that consummate harmony reigns amidst all the stupendous processes of existence, that all its incredibly vast and diverse elements join to form a unitary whole, a cosmos, that it moves toward ever more meaningful realizations of order and form, which rules out accidental causation as unthinkable.

The design discerned in the universe has sometimes been questioned by evolutionists who conjectured that evolutionary development occurred through "natural selection." In the struggle for survival, it was explained, certain members of the species, in whom there had occurred accidental variations in structure and function, proved superior in their ability to survive. Others, not so endowed, became extinct. The surviving "mutations" perpetuated their "deviations," begetting a new and sturdier type. This process, it was alleged, continued

over the long generations of evolutionary time, begetting the continued development and perfection of each species. But scientists have gradually abandoned this theory as inconsistent with the facts. The changes, as recorded by modern paleontology, Dr. Arthur H. Compton points out, "occur for ages in a single direction as if a definite experiment were being tried. Instead of variation at random, as Darwin had supposed, this means progress along the same line, generation after generation. . . . The chance that a world such as ours should occur without intelligent design," continues Dr. Compton, "becomes more and more remote as we learn its wonders."¹

The theory of natural selection has also been pronounced unsatisfactory from the point of view of biology. It cannot account for various characteristics of the living organism, according to Dr. Edmund W. Sinnott, the renowned biologist of Yale University. Among these are the tendency of an organism to regenerate lost parts, the specific shapes of tissues and organs which follow prescribed paths of organized and regulated growth, unrelated to any factors in competitive evolution, and above all the concern for values which becomes more pronounced with the dawn of man. "In nature," he points out, "there are few occasions when the ability of an isolated piece of stem to restore a root system, for example, would be called upon, and it is difficult to believe that this widespread ability has arisen through competitive selection. . . . Can we imagine for example that the differences in leaf shape among our various species of maples and oaks have a great deal to do with the evolutionary success of these species? . . . Surely natural selection can hardly be invoked to explain such regulation."

¹ Arthur H. Compton: "A Modern Concept of God," in *Man's Destiny in Eternity* (Boston: Beacon Press; 1949), pp. 10, 11.

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The theory of natural selection appears especially inadequate to account for the emergence of man and his concern for values. "If men are robots, pushed about by every wind of fate," Dr. Sinnott continues, "why do they show such consistent preferences for immaterial things like beauty and goodness? This problem of values long has puzzled philosophers and still disturbs the complacency of materialism."²

The developments effected in the evolutionary process appear to be its purposive goals, rather than its accidental by-products. As two noted scientists, Sir J. Arthur Thomsen and Patrick Geddes, in a joint statement declared: "It is not merely that all things flow—they flow uphill. Amidst the ceaseless flux there is not only conservation, there is advancement. The changes are not that of a kaleidoscope, but of an onward advancing melody. As the unthinkable long ages passed, the earth became the cradle and home of life; nobler and fairer kind of living creatures appeared; there was a growing victory of life over things and of mind over body; until at last appeared man, who is life's crowning wonder, since he has given to everything else a deeper and higher significance."³

The rationality and purposefulness evident throughout the universe implies a source, and this source is what we call God. But the question arises: How are we to conceive the relationship of God to the universe?

There are two kinds of causes at work, some voluntary and some involuntary. The voice begets an echo, but it begets it without any intervening decision, or act of will. It begets it

² Edmund W. Sinnott: *The Biology of the Spirit* (New York: The Viking Press; 1955), pp. 106, 140.

³ J. Arthur Thomsen and Patrick Geddes: "The Wonder of the World," in H. Shapley (ed.): *A Treasury of Science* (New York: Harper and Brothers; 1943), pp. 13 f.

by a necessary consequence of its nature. A body casts a shadow, but again, as an inevitable and necessary consequence of its nature. No act of will is involved. On the other hand, an artist who paints a picture does so in an act of will, for he can remain what he is and yet desist from painting that picture. An involuntary cause is always coexistent with its effect. A voluntary cause does not have to coexist with its effect. The effect appears when the agent producing it so wills it.

How shall we conceive God's relationship to the universe? Are God and the universe to be conceived as locked together in a chain of interrelations in which one proceeds from the other involuntarily, as the echo proceeds from the voice or the shadow from the body which forms it? An eternal God would then presuppose an eternal universe. God would then act without *will*, as a kind of automaton grinding its effects without awareness or design, but by a blind conformity to its nature. God and the universe are then aspects of each other, neither is independent of the other, neither can exist without the other. Such a God would of course be a blind impersonal force, indifferent to human hopes, unresponsive to our yearnings. He would be an "it," not a "Thou" with whom man can enter into a meaningful relationship and to whom he can turn in words and tokens of prayer and adoration.

Long ago Aristotle argued for the existence of God, but as he conceived Him, He was the unmoved mover of the stars and planets constituting the cosmos, and He and they were eternally coexisting. God and the universe in the Aristotelian outlook existed together in a chain of cause and effect. He was the eternal first cause and the universe the eternal effect of His action. Spinoza taught a similar doctrine. Various modernist reinterpretations of religion have presented a similar conception of God. We are asked to believe in God, but God

is conceived as a power or an aspect of the existing universe, as a process operating within it. He is described as existing within the universe but is not regarded as independent of it.

Maimonides, in his time, struggled with this problem. He could not find arguments to refute the view of the eternalists. On the other hand, it was equally clear to him that the case for an eternal universe was likewise without substantiation. Under the circumstances he felt justified in following the teaching of the Bible, which presents God as Creator of heaven and earth, by an act of will, at a finite point of time, in order to realize purposes of His own choosing.

It is pertinent to inquire as to the attitude contemporary leaders of scientific thought have expressed on the subject. Many who labor in the vast realm of science are committed to limited objectives; they seek specific solutions to specific problems. But there are some whose spirits refuse to be confined. They roam into the limitless realms of existence and seek to glimpse over-all meanings behind the flux of events which constitute the factual structure of the unfolding universe.

The writings of some of the pioneers in the interpretation of modern science portray a universe that cannot be given rationality without assuming a Creator.

The metaphysical implications of modern science involve many subtle inquiries, and they call for the utilization of highly specialized knowledge. But the preponderant thought in the contemporary scientific community points in the direction of creation. Some scientists are drawn to this conclusion with evident timidity, while others affirm it boldly and unequivocally.

Astrophysicists have found a formula to explain the structural evolution of the universe. Hydrogen is regarded as the

primordial element whence the cosmos began, through the workings of the processes of gravitation, radiation, and eventually photosynthesis and genetics, in a time span of several billion years. But whence came the hydrogen atom, and whence the forces of gravitation, radiation, photosynthesis, and genetics? "The origin of origins," declared the noted astronomer Dr. Harlow Shapley, "is beyond astronomy . . . in the realm of the, to us, unknowable."⁴

The internal workings of the universe have spoken to other scientists more cogently in favor of creation. One consideration is the so-called phenomenon of "entropy." The energy by which the universe is sustained, modern physicists note, continues to run down, and it is running down in a non-reversible direction; it is being "entropized."

As Dr. Lincoln Barnett has pointed out, in his illuminating study *The Universe and Dr. Einstein*,⁵ the sun is cooling off, and there will come a time when all our earth will turn to inertness. Indeed all matter is dying through spontaneous radiation. But a process that moves to a finite conclusion must have had a finite beginning. As Dr. Barnett phrased it: "If the universe is running down and nature's processes are proceeding in just one direction, the inescapable inference is that everything has a beginning; somehow and sometime the cosmic process was started, the stellar fires ignited, and the whole universe brought into being. . . . Most of the clues, moreover, that have been discovered at the inner and outer frontiers of scientific cognition suggest a definite time of Creation."

The expanding nature of the universe is another considera-

⁴ Harlow Shapley: "Stars, Ethics and Survival," in his edition of *Science Ponders Religion* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts; 1960), p. 3.

⁵ New York: Mentor Books; 1950. P. 114.

tion which has led astronomers to assume a starting point for the universe. Astronomers had observed that the galaxies, with the billions of stars clustering around them, are continually receding from us, and the more distant the galaxy, the faster its rate of recession. It was in 1927 that Abbé Georges Lemaître announced his hypothesis to account for this phenomenon; it is the so-called "big-bang" hypothesis, which has won ever greater acceptance among modern astronomers. According to Lemaître's hypothesis, all galaxies originated at one point in time—Lemaître places that point about five billion years ago. The expansion of the universe then is to be attributed to an initial "big-bang" which sent the stars flying into space.

There is an advocate among modern astronomers for the view that the universe is eternal. He is Dr. Fred Hoyle of Cambridge University. But to square his theory with the phenomena of the universe he is compelled to assume continuous creation! He is drawn to this astonishing conclusion by two major considerations. One is the fact reported by astrophysics that the universe consists almost entirely of hydrogen. The other fact, also established by astrophysics, is that hydrogen is continually being converted into helium, and this conversion is "a one way process, that is to say, hydrogen cannot be produced in any appreciable quantity through the breakdown of other elements. . . ." "How comes it then," asks Dr. Hoyle, "that the universe consists almost entirely of hydrogen? If matter were infinitely old this would be quite impossible." Reluctantly Dr. Hoyle is moved to assume what he calls "continuous creation." "This is perhaps the most surprising of all . . . the conclusions of the New Cosmology," he declares. "For I find myself forced to assume that the nature of the universe requires continuous creation—the perpetual

bringing into being of new background material. . . . The most obvious question to ask about continuous creation is this: Where does the created material come from? It does not come from anywhere. Material simply appears—it is created. At one time various atoms composing the material do not exist, and at a later time they do.”⁶

Dr. Hoyle’s theory has been steadily losing ground among astronomers. Dr. Martin Ryle of Cambridge University recently announced confirmation of the “big-bang theory” of the origin of the universe, on the basis of radio signals from the remotest galaxies. Another confirmation of the “big-bang” theory has recently been announced by Dr. Robert Jastrow, chief of the theoretical division of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration’s Goddard Space Flight Center, on the basis of the evidence gathered in outer space by the American Explorer XI Satellite.⁷ The “big-bang” theory presents the universe as vastly old but not ageless. It is a universe whose existence may be computed in billions of years, but it had a beginning at some point of finite time.

It is remarkable that similar conceptions are appearing among scientists in the Soviet Union, this after decades of enforced indoctrination in Marxist atheism. We cite a recent report in *The New York Times*⁸ by the noted reporter on Soviet affairs, Harrison E. Salisbury: “Within the most advanced echelon of Soviet science there is emerging a tendency to seek a non-materialist, spiritual concept of the universe. . . . How widespread this tendency is cannot be established. . . . But there is reason to believe that some of the most eminent figures in the galaxy of Soviet physicists and astronomers and

⁶ Fred Hoyle: *The Nature of the Universe* (New York: Harper and Brothers; 1950), pp. 122, 123.

⁷ *The New York Times*, December 20, 1961, pp. 1, 3.

⁸ February 7, 1962, pp. 1, 4.

mathematicians are involved. . . . These men have not become believers in a formal religion or dogma. . . . But they are no longer atheists."

Mr. Salisbury cites the following statement by a Soviet writer as typical of the faith entertained by these men: "I do not imagine God as He is depicted on icons. To me God is a sort of spiritual principle, the stimulus to the emergence of the galaxies, the stars, the planets and of everything which lives and reproduces on these planets, from the most elementary cells up to man."

This trend in modern science has been given its boldest formulation by the noted British astronomer Sir James Jeans. "Modern scientific theory," declared Sir James Jeans, "compels us to think of the Creator as working outside time and space, which are part of his creation, just as the artist is outside his canvas."⁹

The world view which emerges from the rigorous conclusions of science, at least as some scientists see it, is essentially in harmony with the basic teachings of Judaism. As Dr. Ralph W. Burhoe, writing in *Science Ponders Religion*, puts it: "The scientific view seems to confirm the ancient religious notion that man did not make himself, but that he is the creature of an infinitely greater power. . . . Again it seems that the scientific faith is essentially akin to the ancient religious faith that the infinity in which we live and move is in reality one, not many. The scientific faith that all things are variants in a single system, that one law rules the cosmos from end to end . . . is a faith that grows stronger with each succeeding new discovery that shows the relationship between phenomena that previously did not seem to be related. . . .

⁹ Sir James Jeans: *The Mysterious Universe* (London: Pelican Books; 1937), p. 183.

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Man can most properly conceive of himself as a local agent and servant of the creative process of the universe. . . . And the first corollary of this first law, man's kinship with his Creator, is man's kinship with all his fellow-men, a kinship that is deeper than blood. . . . We participate in a single, sacred whole, from which we are inseparable."¹

We have surveyed the findings of modern science as an aid to our belief in God's existence. For the existence of God implies a characterization of the universe. It implies a universe of order and purposiveness. The findings of science reveal that we do indeed live in such a universe. But it is important to add that religion is not committed to the particular theories of science we have drawn on. For science is in flux, and today's knowledge may well prove erroneous in the light of new evidence and have to give way to new theories to be propounded in the future. We have cited these teachings of science as exemplification of the rationality and purposefulness which pervades all existence. In every generation we are called on to exemplify the basic religious vision about the meaning immanent in existence through whatever knowledge is current at the time. The vision endures but its expression in detail is incidental and replaceable.

When religion depends for any extended time on a particular exemplification of its vision, it may be reluctant to surrender it, even after new knowledge has rendered it obsolete. Some religious teachers continued to cling to the Ptolemaic astronomy long after it had been discredited by Copernicus. In all levels of life we tend to cling to the familiar, to resist change.

The failure on the part of religion to respond to the changes

¹ Ralph W. Burhoe: "Salvation in the Twentieth Century," in H. Shapley (ed.): *Science Ponders Religion*, pp. 80-2.

in scientific knowledge creates a conflict between religion and science. But the conflict is not inherent in the essential nature of either religion or science. The two are distinctive in their roles and they explore different dimensions of existence. As A. N. Whitehead puts it: "Science is concerned with the general conditions which are observed to regulate physical phenomena, whereas religion is wholly wrapped up in the contemplation of moral and aesthetic values. On the one side there is the law of gravitation, and on the other the contemplation of the beauty of holiness. What one side sees, the other misses and vice versa."²

Some expressions of the religious vision have become an integral part of the religious tradition and cannot be lightly surrendered, even though they draw on illustrative detail which we know to be factually inaccurate. The Bible itself sometimes presents its values by illustrative details which are based on knowledge current at the time of its writing, or drawn from the world of the imagination rather than the world of fact. The Rabbis, for example, in one instance (Bava Batra 15a) declared the story of Job a "mashal" or a parable, a work of the imagination, in other words, rather than a factual portrayal of a real man's destiny. Some of the early stories in the book of Genesis may represent a utilization of ancient saga, transformed by the inspired author into a vehicle of his earnest moral exhortations.

The human race would suffer serious cultural and spiritual deprivation if it limited itself to works of "realism" and rejected all that is outside the canons of factual authenticity. We may retain literary materials outside the world of "realism" provided we interpret them freely, figuratively, as sym-

² A. N. Whitehead: *Science and the Modern World*, p. 184.

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bolic expressions of a moral vision. Distortion sets in when we interpret them literally, and insist on the acceptance of every detail as factually accurate, in defiance of scientific or historical knowledge.

There is too much at stake for human life to be inhibited from affirming God's existence because of the margin of lingering doubt which haunts every work of inferential reason. Our whole structure of values collapses unless there is a center of meaning in the universe by which they may be sustained. The very ground of our own stability is cut loose when we detach ourselves from a source beyond ourselves that gives direction and purpose to our existence. As Dr. Carl Jung, the noted psychologist and psychoanalyst, has pointed out,³ the belief in God is a necessity of the psyche, and we are urged to this belief by the deepest layers of our conscious as well as our subconscious self.

Whoever wills to believe in God will find ample reason to support his belief. Whoever is sensitive to the drama of existence can find the signs of God's presence everywhere. All existence will disclose to him a divine dimension, the imprint of the Creator on the work of His creation.

Robert Frost has written his own version of the road that leads from the universe to God:

ACCIDENTALLY ON PURPOSE

The Universe is but the Thing of things,
The things but balls all going round in rings,
Some of them mighty huge, some mighty tiny,
All of them radiant and mighty shiny.

³ Carl G. Jung: *Psychology and Religion* (New Haven: Yale University Press; 1938), p. 104.

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They mean to tell us all was rolling blind
Till accidentally it hit on mind
In an albino monkey in a jungle
And even then it had to grope and bungle

Till Darwin came to earth upon a year
To show the evolution how to steer.
They mean to tell us, though, the Omnibus
Had no real purpose till it got to us.

Don't you believe it. At the very worst
It must have had the purpose from the first
To produce purpose as the fitter bred:
We were just purpose coming to a head.

Whose purpose was it? His or Hers or Its?
Let's leave that to the scientific wits.
Grant me intention, purpose, and design—
That's near enough for me to the Divine.

And yet for all this help of head and brain
How happily instinctive we remain,
Our best guide upward further to the light,
Passionate preference such as love at sight.⁴

⁴ From "Accidentally on Purpose," from *In the Clearing* by Robert Frost. Copyright © 1960, 1962 by Robert Frost. Reprinted by permission of Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, Inc.



IV



Is God a Person?

A PERSON who thinks deeply about the riddle of existence will generally affirm the belief in God's existence. But how shall we think of God? How shall we conceive Him? There are countless phenomena in the world which we interpret as the effects of God's actions, but how shall we conceive of God in His own essence, in His own being?

The subject has challenged all men who have sought to understand their religion in rational terms, and they have often cautioned us that the question is subtle and bound to be elusive. Job put it this way: "Canst thou find out the deep things of God? Canst thou attain unto the purpose of the Almighty? It is high as the heaven, what canst thou do? Deeper than the nether-world, what canst thou know? The measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea" (Job 11:7-9).

The pagan gods were not sovereign over the world in which they reigned; they were subject to the laws which acted on the rest of nature. The gods were born out of a primal stuff,

which contained the seed of all being, including what we call the natural world. The gods were not "creators" of the world; they were mortal and subject to vicissitudes of circumstance, like those which confronted other creatures. The careers of the gods were the theme of myths which flourished in all ancient religions.

God as conceived in Jewish tradition is the Creator of heaven and earth and of all the things that inhabit them. He fashioned existence *yaysh may'ayin*, without a pre-existent material. No primal stuff preceded Him; the laws of nature do not constrain Him. He is the Author of nature and, therefore, will respect the rules which He has ordained to govern creation, but He is unconditioned by nature or by the principles embodied in nature.

As Creator of life we must necessarily think of Him as eternal, for if He were temporal, we would have to envision a state in which God did not exist, and if He did not exist, nothing else could exist. For once we allow ourselves to envision a state in which God did not exist, then we have reached an absence of a Cause in whom the creative energy that launched the universe might originate.

An eternal God must necessarily be incorporeal or without a physical dimension. The physical world is His creation, but He himself is without materiality. For all things physical are of finite duration, they are doomed to inevitable disintegration and death. This principle has been given new confirmation by the findings of modern physics. All matter is in a state of constant radiation; it is losing mass and is continually suffering decomposition and loss of self. A God limited by attributes of corporeality would not be God; He would not be an eternal being, and He could not have brought all other beings into existence.

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God's incorporeality is also another aspect of His unity. We sometimes ascribe unity to material things, but things material cannot have true unity. They are compounded of many elements. The individual plant or the individual animal is constituted of a vast number of organs, each highly specialized in function, but integrated to the purpose of the larger unit of life of which it is a part. Even the individual cell, even the individual atom, is not an ultimate unity; it remains divisible into component elements. Only what is above the physical can be truly one. And when we say God is one, we declare that He is outside all the considerations which govern the realm of the physical.

We declare this in the third of the thirteen articles of faith as formulated by Maimonides: "I believe with a firm faith that the Creator, praised be His name, is not a body, and that He cannot be defined by the attributes of physical bodies, and that He is without any particular form whatever."

It is difficult for us to envision what we cannot experience. We are limited by our own world. All that we encounter is physical or a derivation of the physical. A melody lingers in the mind, but it was released by physical beings through the use of physical instruments. The vision of things beautiful is a form assumed by material substances. Love and hate are inner mental states, but they are flowers, noble or poisonous, grown on a physical base. They are engendered by a physical creature in the course of its experience in the world. Thought is immaterial but it is a function of a physical organ, the brain. We cannot know what life is like for the embryo in the fateful weeks of life within the mother's womb. How can we envision a Reality wholly nonphysical, God?

The most important statement about God was made by the prophet Isaiah, when he declared: "Holy, holy, holy is the

Lord of hosts." The term "holy" means *set apart*; God is radically apart or different from the realities we know. He is, to use a term suggested by the well-known theologian Rudolf Otto, the *Wholly Other*. All realities are physical and temporal; they carry an inner division born of the plurality of elements which make up their essence. God is nonphysical, eternal, and truly one. All other realities have an external cause for their existence; they draw the seeds of their existence from a long chain of ancestors; they draw their sustenance from a variety of sources in their environment. Deficient in themselves, they depend on *others* to supply them with the elements of nourishment, to compensate them for their deficiency. God owes His existence to no one outside Himself; He is self-sufficient. He sustains the universe, but the universe does not sustain Him.

All other realities are real only in a *relative* sense. Their existence is relative. Their strength is limited, their time on earth is limited, they see feebly, whether with the eyes of the flesh or with those of the mind. Man is the wisest of all earthly creatures, but is not his mind only a tiny light against a vast darkness that meets him everywhere? Here and there he has been able to wrest a tiny secret from the mystery of existence. But measured against the totality of knowledge and wisdom which is embodied in the panorama of existence, his knowledge is like a tiny candle in the night. It illumines but the area around him, and the rest remains covered by the mists of the night. God's existence is absolute; His might, His knowledge, His wisdom, they exist in God without limit and without qualification.

Our knowledge is, at best, a dull flame that illumines only a fragment of the great darkness that surrounds our lives, and we must be content to cherish that. In the words of Mai-

monides: "All that we understand is the fact that He exists, that He is a Being to whom none of His creatures is similar, who has nothing in common with them, who does not include plurality, who is never too feeble to produce other beings, and whose relation to the universe is that of a steerman to a boat; and even this is not a real relation, a real simile, but serves only to convey to us the idea that God rules the universe; that is, that He gives it duration, and preserves its necessary arrangement. . . . Praised be He! In the contemplation of His essence, our comprehension and knowledge prove insufficient, in the examination of His works, how they necessarily result from His will, our knowledge proves to be ignorance, and in the endeavor to extol Him in words, all our efforts in speech are mere weakness and failure" (*Guide I*, 58).

Whenever great minds direct their probing to the mystery of God's existence and the manner of His work in the world, they tend to arrive at a similar destination. They look at the world of existence for clues of His presence. The clues are there, and they hug the discovery as a great treasure. But God as He is, as He acts, remains a mystery. Sir Isaac Newton, the architect of modern science, lived in a world other than that of Maimonides and in another epoch, and he sought God by another road, but he was led to similar conclusions.

Newton thought of science, which unveils the secrets of nature, as being in truth "the highest form of reasoning about God." When seen in its broadest implications it brings us closer to God, but endless veils continue to separate us from Him. In the words of Newton: "And though every true step made in this philosophy brings us not immediately to the knowledge of the first cause, yet it brings us nearer to it and on that account is to be highly valued." As to the way God acts, Newton confessed his sense of bafflement: "In Him are

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all things contained and moved . . . in a manner not at all corporeal, in a manner utterly unknown to us.”¹

We have thus far spoken of God in negative terms; we have said what He is not. This is perhaps the most important knowledge to which we may attain. We may not be able to comprehend what God is, but we surely know what He is not. He is wholly other than any other being, and He is wholly other than any definition we may frame to describe Him. The hymn *Yigdal* invites us to this “negative” knowledge of God:

O come, the living God adore,
He is, He was, He will be ever more.
His oneness is a thing of mystery,
No man can fathom His true unity;
He is without a body's form or frame,
No mortal lips His essence can proclaim.

The only positive knowledge we may have of God is indirect. It is a knowledge derived from His work. We may know an artist through his art. We can know certain attributes of Shakespeare without ever having met him; we can know it through reading his works. A man's work is the lengthened shadow of himself. It is a reflection of his nature, a clue to his beliefs, his values, and his prejudices. It is similarly with God. By understanding His works we can gain a certain knowledge of Him who fashioned it.

All the characterizations of God in our various religious writings must be understood in this sense—they are really characterizations of His “work,” not of His essence. We say

¹ Quoted by Gerald Holton: “Notes on The Religious Orientation of Scientists,” in *Science Ponders Religion*, p. 61.

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He is merciful because His work shows a concern for the preservation of each creature. We say He is gracious because His gifts are given us freely, without our necessarily deserving them. We say He is just because there is a principle of retribution at work in His world. Violations of the principles which govern existence, whether in the domain of the physical or in the domain of human relations, soon beget destructive consequences.

All the names of God which figure in Biblical literature are in truth derivatives of His work as discerned in the order of creation. His proper name, *YHVH*, we have interpreted as the third person causative form of the verb *havah*, or in its later form *hayah*, which means "to be," and it therefore means "He who begets being," the Creator, in other words. *El* means "power" and *Elohim* means "aggregate of power," and these names when used for God therefore describe Him as the "Powerful One" or the "Almighty." *Shaddai* has been derived from a word which means "sufficiency," as well as from a word meaning "breast," and it therefore refers to His sufficiency of might, or to His providential role as the Provider and Sustainer of the universe. *Adonai* means "Lord." All these names therefore describe God not as He is in Himself but as a functioning factor in the life of creation. They derive from His work, not His essence.

God is also called by a series of names which are really personifications of the attributes of His providence. He is called the Creator, the King, the Father, the Merciful One, the Shepherd, the Judge. These names are all metaphors descriptive of God's role in the creation of life and in directing it toward its destiny. As a further extension of this personification, various physical organs are also attributed to God. We speak of God opening His hand to satisfy everything with

favor. We also say that God redeemed the Israelites from Egyptian bondage with an outstretched arm. The Psalmist says that "the eyes of the Lord are toward those who revere Him." The prophet, in acknowledging God as the source of His inspiration, tells us "the mouth of the Lord has spoken." All these are figures of speech. They are born of the tendency in our language to concretize communication by coining metaphors based on human experience to replace an abstract statement. On a human level good is bestowed by the reach of the hand, the arm is the instrument for smiting an adversary, the eye is the organ for exercising watchfulness, the mouth is the organ through which we transmit a communication. God performs these actions without physical organs, but we make our assertions more vivid by figuratively ascribing such organs to Him.

The most dramatic elaboration of an analogy is afforded by the High Holy Day liturgy. The conception of God as Judge was elaborated into the awesome vision of the Day of Judgment. This was finally embodied in the *U-Netaneh Tokef* hymn recited on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. Here God conducts a judicial procedure analogous to the procedure which is followed before an earthly tribunal. Witnesses are heard; the record is consulted; the decision is duly sealed before becoming final. This hymn and the conception which inspires it help to give vividness to the doctrine of human responsibility before God. Some people take it literally and thus shrink God to the dimension of man. It was Maimonides who cautioned against such literalization when he declared (*Guide* II, 47): "All these phrases are figurative, and we must not assume that God has a book in which He writes, or from which He blots out, as those generally believe who do not find figurative speech in such passages."

All language abounds in such figures of speech. A woman tells her friend to "keep an eye" on her child, when all she means is that she be vigilant of the child's safety. We speak of the eye of a needle, the mouth of a river, the foot of a mountain, the heart of a problem. None of these things is true in a literal sense, but it is the liberty we take in invoking such metaphors which gives our speech color and vitality. Our minds abhor the abstract; they respond to a language concrete with the images of things we know in our experience.

All discourse about God is necessarily "analogical"; it ascribes to God actions and attributes which are borrowed from human experience, which are essentially analogies drawn between man and God. It has been said, and with good reason, that if oxen could describe God they would surely describe Him in their own image. The Rabbis were conscious of a like subjectivism in their own pronouncements. God is eternal Being, elusive of any positive knowledge of His essence. We ascribe to Him attributes of perfection, but is not our notion of perfection conditioned by our own experience, by what appears as perfection on the finite plane of man's existence?

The Talmud recognizes both the peril as well as the gain in analogical language. Commenting on the verse in Psalms: "The voice of God resounds with might," the Midrash (*Yalkut Shimoni* on Psalms 29:4) declares: "'With might' refers to the relative might in comprehension on the part of the recipients of God's word." Said Rabbi Hezekiah bar Hiyya: "Great is the daring of the prophets who compared the Creator to a creature, and the plant to Him who planted it. As it is written (Psalms 84:12), 'For the Lord God is a sun and shield'; and it is also written (Amos 3:8), 'The lion has roared, who will not fear. . . . The Lord God has spoken, who can but prophesy?' It is also written (Ezekiel 43:2),

'And His voice was like the voice of many waters. . . .' Thus it is manifest that we convey to the ear what it can comprehend, and we show the eye what it is capable of beholding" (Midrash, *Shohar Tov* on Psalms 1:1).

Every philosophy of religion that has meditated on God as eternal Being and sought to convey this knowledge to human ears has stumbled into this problem. Plotinus expressed it thus: "Since we are powerless to find the terms with which it would be appropriate to speak of the Supreme Reality, we take inferior characteristics from inferior things and apply them metaphorically to Him, making such and such statements about Him. Yet there is no way by which we can apply anything in the proper sense to Him as a predicate . . . everything comes short of Him, all beauty, all majesty. . . ." ²

The characterization of God by analogy to aspects of man's life derives from the mind's difficulty in grasping a Reality whose existence is unqualified by aspects of finitude. God's proper name, *YHVH*, read as though written *Adonai*, has sometimes been taken as referring to His essence as undifferentiated, eternal Being. But this is an abstraction. We know only forms of being which are subject to temporality, which share the accidents of corporeality. The moment Scripture seeks to elucidate the meaning of the absolute, it creates *anthropomorphisms*, that is, it speaks in the language of human experience.

We must understand anthropomorphism as a concession of speech to the limitations of the human mind, which demands concreteness in communication. Every anthropomorphism is to be taken as a figure of speech, not as an exact statement about God. As Saadiah Gaon phrased it: "All those attributes

² Quoted by E. Bevan: *Symbolism and Belief* (Gifford Lectures) (Boston: Beacon Press; 1938), p. 18.

of an apparently anthropomorphic character which we use in speaking of Him have a symbolic and figurative meaning; they must not be taken in their literal sense as one would apply them to man.”³

The most serious anthropomorphism in the Bible is found in the account of the creation of man. We are told that man was created in God's image. As Genesis 1:27 phrases it: “And God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him.” If we allowed ourselves to take this literally it would suggest that God is endowed with a particular form, that He resembles the human person. But once again we are dealing with a figure of speech.

The term “image” may be used literally to denote the physical form, but it may also be used figuratively to denote an immaterial essence, a quality or an attribute. Thus if we were to say that the son molds himself in the image of his father we would not necessarily assert that he seeks to resemble his father in appearance; we are more likely to mean that he seeks to emulate his father's qualities. Primitive religions often saw a *physical* resemblance between man and the deity, but the epic of creation in the Bible is clearly free of such primitivism. As M. D. Cassuto, the noted Biblical scholar who contributed so much to the illumination of the original Biblical text, explains it,⁴ the image of God to which man is said to bear a resemblance is to be understood in a *figurative* sense, as applying not to form but to attributes.

When we say that man was made in God's image we mean that man was endowed with certain godly qualities. Man's

³ Saadiah Gaon: *The Book of Doctrines and Beliefs*, Alexander Altmann (ed.) (Oxford: Phaidon Press Ltd.; 1946), II, 3.

⁴ M. D. Cassuto: *May-Adam Ve-Ad Noah* (Jerusalem: Hebrew University; 1944), p. 29.

godly qualities are his kindness, his concern for justice, his striving for order and beauty, his creative impulses. The most significant of these qualities is his intellectual faculty which helps him retrace God's wisdom in creation, to probe into the mystery of life to discover the law which is at the heart of existence.

We have spoken of the peril in describing God in a language of anthropomorphism. The peril consists in the tendency to literalism. We tend to take words in their literal meaning, and we thereby run the danger of equating God's essence with the figures of speech we have coined to symbolize His providence.

Literalism represents a twofold danger to our religion. The unenlightened take anthropomorphic expressions literally, and they believe them to be true. They thereby shrink their view of God to the level of the physical. The enlightened cannot believe in an anthropomorphic God; they therefore tend to renounce the belief in God altogether.

Many of the critics of religion, in ancient as in modern times, have criticized religion on the level of literalism, on the level of anthropomorphism. Their rebellion is against the religion of the unenlightened. Their strictures often sound hollow when examined by the light of a more mature conception of God, one that employs figurative epithets in describing Him knowing that they are only figures, metaphors, and analogies invoked by the mind to describe what is in its essence undescrivable. The late Professor David E. Roberts showed recently that the atheism of Jean-Paul Sartre is in part directed against a crudely anthropomorphic view of God, which he identifies with all levels of religious teaching.⁵

⁵ David E. Roberts: *Existentialism and Religious Belief* (New York: Oxford University Press; 1957), pp. 214-220.

It was to save the enlightened from identifying religion with the literal version of its doctrines, especially its conception of God, that Moses Maimonides originally wrote his great philosophic work, *The Guide for the Perplexed*. As Maimonides put it in the introduction to this work: "The object of this treatise is to enlighten a religious person who has been trained to believe in our holy Torah . . . and at the same time has been successful in his philosophical studies. Human reason has attracted him to abide in its sphere, and he finds it difficult to accept as correct the teachings based on the literal interpretation of the Torah. . . . Hence he is lost in perplexity and anxiety." The major preoccupation of *The Guide for the Perplexed* is to interpret classical references to God, cast as they are in a language of anthropomorphism, by their figurative or symbolic meanings and to warn against the distortions which would set in were we to take those references literally.

Is God a person? From all that we have said it is clear that God is not a person. We speak of Him as though He were a person; we call Him "He," because the qualities of personality are the highest marks of perfection we know. In a figurative sense these qualities are applied to Him, but God is above personality as He is above everything else that is part of the world. A person functions through a physical self; he is finite, temporal, relative in his virtues and excellences. God is wholly other than all this.

We have given reality to our language about God through analogies based on the human person, but God Himself is greater, wiser, mightier, nobler than any man. There are godly qualities in all men, but in essence God and man are wholly dissimilar realms of being. Man is a creature, a mortal, while God is—God.

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This is well expressed in the Hymn of Glory which is part of our liturgy for the Sabbath and the festivals:

I will tell of Thy glory
Though I have not seen Thee,
I will speak of Thee in similes
Though I cannot know Thy essence.
Thou didst reveal a semblance of Thy splendor
In the mystic visions of Thy servants, the prophets:
They envisioned Thy grandeur and Thy might
From the stupendous work of Thy creation,
They speak of Thee not as Thou art
But by inference drawn from Thy handiwork.



V



How Shall We Think of Man?

JEWISH TRADITION looks upon man as the crown and glory of creation. He is at the center of the drama of life. In him is the purpose of all existence on the way to fulfillment. This doctrine is reflected in the Biblical story of creation, which portrays all stages in the appearance of life as but preliminary to the great moment when man enters upon the scene. It is expressed in the declaration that God made man in His own image. Jewish tradition never loses sight of the finite character of man, his smallness, his unworthiness when compared to the perfection that is in God. But at the same time it sees in man the closest approximation to the divine which a creature may attain.

The Psalmist expressed it thus (Psalms 8:2, 4-7, 10): "O Lord our Lord, how glorious is Thy name in all the earth!

. . . When I behold Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers, the moon and the stars which Thou hast established, what is man that Thou are mindful of him, and the son of man that Thou hast regard for him? Yet Thou hast made him but a little lower than the angels and hast crowned him with glory and honor. Thou hast given him dominion over the works of Thy hands, Thou hast put all things under his feet. . . . O Lord our Lord, how glorious is Thy name in all the earth!" The Psalmist was aware that from the perspective of God's majesty man was too trivial to merit His mindfulness, but as he saw it, God had nevertheless crowned man with glory and honor and had made him pre-eminent in the hierarchy of existence.

The Jewish estimate of man has often been challenged in the modern world. The challenge has derived from various sources. Some have pointed to man's lowly origin, as revealed in the scientific studies of the evolution of life on earth. Instead of being the direct creation of God, a noble being separate and distinct from the rest of existence, man appears in the findings of Darwinists as an integral part of evolution. He has sprung by traceable stages from the most primitive beginnings of life, and his immediate ancestor is in the ape family, to whom he bears many striking resemblances.

Others have mocked the claim of man's alleged greatness by citing the new astronomy which began with Copernicus. Vast is the universe that modern astronomy reveals to us, and man is like a speck of dust, and even less, before the stupendous beings, the stars and planets without number that move in their orbits in cosmic space. The earth itself, which is man's home, has been dethroned from her ancient eminence. She is no longer conceived of as the center of the solar system, with

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sun and moon and stars to render her homage by illuminating her darkness. She is but a tiny planet in a universe of planets and revolves as they all do in endless gyrations on a path around the sun. Astronomers, moreover, are increasingly drawn to the opinion that other planets too have life on them, and who knows whether a race of creatures more intelligent and nobler than man may not inhabit another planet-home somewhere in space.

And man has also been mocked because of his mortality. He is here today, and for a while struts proudly across the scene of his labors. But in the midst of all his plans and ambitions, his breath departs, and he must drop everything to which his hands cling so lovingly. What significance can be attached to life when it must be lived against this knowledge of ultimate doom from which there is no reprieve?

The most serious challenge to man's alleged greatness is his moral failure. There are episodes of wisdom and goodness in the human scene, but how infrequent and flitting they are! Man has continued to betray beastly qualities. All kinds of dark forces are operative in his nature. He has disappointed the hopes placed in him by continued displays of folly and meanness. Victor Hugo once wrote: "In the twentieth century war will be dead; the scaffold will be dead; hatred will be dead; frontier boundaries will be dead; dogmas will be dead; man will live. He will possess something higher than all these—a great country, the whole earth, and a great hope, the whole heaven." Victor Hugo committed the unpardonable error against which, as we shall note, Maimonides warned us; in essence, he was guilty of calculating the time of the coming of the messiah. But man's sorry condition nevertheless justifies the question whether man is indeed possessed with the po-

tentialities to attain the high state which optimists, religious as well as secular, have ascribed to him.

Let it be noted that Christianity has often joined in the indictment of human nature. Man is pictured in much of classic Christianity as a "fallen" creature, intrinsically depraved and incapable of moral progress through his own efforts. He can only save himself by surrendering to the mercy of God. Karl Barth, one of the most influential Protestant theologians in our own time, has argued forcefully in favor of a pessimistic view of man. Man is said to lack the capacity to save himself. Like a criminal who confesses his guilt and has but one recourse, to throw himself on the mercy of the court, so is man called on to confess his sinfulness and to seek salvation by depending entirely on God's forgiveness and mercy. The notion that man has the capacity to save himself through "good works," to rid his life of the evils that plague him, to build a society of freedom and justice, is described in the pessimistic theologies as an instance of human pride, itself a manifestation of man's sinfulness and fallen nature.

Jews have often enough been the victim of the depravity in human nature. But Jews have continued to believe in man. The optimism bred in Jewish tradition became part of the very mind of the Jew. Even when he has allowed himself to be secularized and to shed his religious outlook, the Jew tends to believe in man's moral efficacy. He remains a believer and a protagonist of human progress. This is one of the bases of Judaism—to believe in man's essential nobility. A repudiation of man's nobility is not only an affront to man, it is an offense against God who made him. How can Judaism maintain its faith in man in the face of all these challenges arrayed against him?

. . .

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It is one of the grossest errors made by some protagonists of religion as well as by some of its detractors to take the Biblical story of creation as a complete account of the origin of life. The Biblical account offers only the sketchiest generality, and it is clear that it is intended to deal with questions other than those normally dealt with by science. The Biblical and scientific study of life's origins are not competitive accounts. Each deals with the same reality, to be sure, but each deals with it from a different perspective. The Biblical story seeks to communicate certain religious values. It seeks to convey a *value* judgment concerning life, concerning the world at large, and specifically concerning man. It expresses through this account the deepest conviction of Judaism, that existence had its origin through the action of a beneficent Creator, that the world is the embodiment of His design, that it is purposive and friendly to man, and that man himself is the apex of the creative process. The details of how this stupendous process unfolded are not given, except in the general terms, that God said and it was. *How* it was is a concern of science. The Biblical writer did not deal with it. To the extent that he dealt with it at all, he merely appropriated current notions. These however were not his major burden. He used them simply as a convenient concretized setting through which to express his value judgments. The value judgments are important to us; these are part of our faith.

The Biblical account does not in fact remove man from the rest of existence. His is pictured as having been created "out of the dust of the earth." The something special which distinguishes man is the soul which God breathed into him. Jewish teachers often took this as their theme, and they pictured man as a microcosm, as embodying all elements of existence within himself, the lower as well as the higher. Rabbinic specu-

lations projected the thought that our own world is only a final stage in God's creative labors, that God had created other worlds which were superseded because He found them defective; they gave way so that the more perfect might replace the less perfect. One rabbi allowed himself to trace the stages of development in man himself. The original creature as he appeared on earth, it is said, was apelike, with a tail protruding from his back. Rabbi Judah Halevi pictures a ladder of evolution which places man well within the larger process of unfolding by which all else came into being. "The elements," he suggests (*Kuzari* 4:3), "gradually evolved metals, plants, animals . . . finally the pure essence of man." We do not suggest that there was nothing new in Darwinism, that the ancients really knew it all before. We cite all this only to indicate that Jewish teachers did not look upon the Biblical account as a complete statement of the origin of man, that the Biblical account did not inhibit them from speculation as to *how* it really *was* after God had commanded.

Areas of investigation which normally fall within the scope of science can be answered only by the findings of science. Where the Bible or the Talmud have accounts at variance with the clear teachings of science, we must follow science, for the accounts in the Bible or Talmud dealing with such questions reflect the culture of the period when the Biblical or Talmudic writers lived and wrote. As Maimonides expressed it (*Guide* III, 14), we "must not expect that everything our sages say respecting astronomical matters should agree with observation, for mathematics was not fully developed in those days; and their statements were not based on the authority of the prophets, but on the knowledge which they themselves possessed or derived from contemporary men of science." "In matters of a speculative nature," he added, "everyone

acts according to the results of his own study and accepts that which appears to him established by proof."

It is not in the study of how man developed, of the stages through which he passed before reaching his present status, that we are dealing with issues vital to Judaism. The issue vital to Judaism, in the story of man's origin, is in the *value judgments* involved. To the extent that science deals with this question it tends to confirm the judgment of Judaism. For science tends to present the entire cosmic process as interrelated and as having as an underlying objective the production of a creature capable of consciousness. As Dr. Ralph W. Burhoe expresses it: "Any notion that man is independent or alienated from the total program of the ultimate reality of the universe is an illusion, so far as the growing faith of science is concerned. No man is alone, no man is insignificant."¹ As we discern from tracing back the steps of the evolutionary process, the concern to fashion a creature like man, capable of freedom and reason, has been at the heart of it all, from the dim beginnings when the mysterious ferment commenced to stir the elements toward their miraculous adventure of begetting the world in all its teeming fullness.

Professor F. S. C. Northrop of Yale has proposed the hypothesis of a "microscopic atom," by which he refers to the universe as an organized intelligent unit, directing its own process toward its chosen objectives. "One should note," writes Dr. Compton, "that the theory of evolution is in no sense an explanation of why these things happen. The scientific theory of evolution is concerned wholly with describing *how* [italics ours] the changes occur." Contemplating the total picture drawn of man by science in the concept of the evolutionary process, Dr. Compton holds that "the creation of

¹ Burhoe: op. cit., p. 82.

intelligent persons is a major objective of the Creator of the universe.”²

Is man immodest in claiming greatness for himself because astronomically speaking he is so insignificant? The late Arthur James Balfour once remarked that astronomically speaking man may appear insignificant, but astronomically speaking man is the astronomer; it is he who has the intelligence and imagination to probe the mysteries of the heavens and to speculate about the most subtle and elusive and tantalizing questions of existence. Astronomically speaking, is it not a mark of his very greatness that man can conceive the vastness and grandeur of the universe, to perceive his own insignificance?

If there be intelligent beings on other planets then they certainly share in man's dignity. In the realm of the physical we assume continuity in the universe; we assume that the basic properties of matter, the basic laws of motion remain the same in all the worlds of all the galaxies as they are on earth. Otherwise a science of astronomy would have been impossible. As Fred Hoyle has said, “If I were asked to define theoretical astronomy in one sentence I should say that it consists of discovering the properties of matter, partly by experiments carried out on the earth and partly through the detailed observation of near-by space, and in then applying the results to the universe as a whole.”³ May we not assume a similar continuity in the spiritual? If intelligent life exists on any planet in the universe other than the earth, it may be far ahead of terrestrial man or behind him, but it is undoubtedly of the same stuff, for consciousness is the most precious element in the treasury of creation, its culminating point in the surge of life. And

² Arthur H. Compton: “A Modern Concept of God,” in *Man's Destiny in Eternity*, pp. 11, 20.

³ Fred Hoyle: op. cit., p. 5.

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wherever there be creatures with these properties they must be seen as bearing the divine image in themselves. In such an eventuality, God's wonders would indeed be even greater than man ever surmised.

One of the hazards against which man must indeed beware is that of pride born of his distinction. With every advantage gained by him from the bounty of creation man is given an added temptation to self-adulation. The wealthy have sometimes grown overly proud of their wealth and the wise of their wisdom. Flushed with pride in their achievements in science, the arts, and technology, men have occasionally proclaimed themselves as ultimates, and they have indulged in the idolatry of self-worship. Modesty becomes a man. In the perspective of the Eternal, what is man with all his impressive achievements? He is like a child playing with pebbles! But there is dignity in man too, for he alone has been endowed with the capacity of judging his life from the perspective of the Eternal.

Man is mortal. He abides in the world for but a limited time, and then his sun sets, and his breath departs from him. But his mortality does not necessarily degrade him. On some levels, as we shall have occasion to see, he has the power to transcend his mortality, and he can enter into life eternal. But death, in its own grimness and terror, has a positive aspect in the scheme of divine providence. For death is the price of life.

If there were no death, there could be no birth. If the rose did not die in the rosebush, no new roses could grow on it. The birth of a new garb of green in the spring is made possible by the fact that the old foliage has perished and fallen to the ground. Without death the world would become fixed and permanent. It would be a static world, without change.

Everything would be preserved in it as it is, and nothing new would be born in it.

Man was born mortal, and it suits a finite creature to have his day and then withdraw (Bereshit Rabbah 27:4, 30:8). The old must make room for the new, which can make a fresh start on the unending quest toward which all creation moves, to bring life toward ever greater refinement and perfection. As Maimonides observed: "If man were never subject to change there could be no generation; there would be but one single being, and no individuals forming a species." The fact that man is a bodily creature subject to "genesis and destruction" must be regarded as a good, Maimonides continued, since it is the means of "perpetuating existence and the continuity of individual beings through the emergence of one after the withdrawal of the other" (*Guide* III, 10). Death contributes a vital episode to the cycle of existence, taught Rabbi Meir (Bereshit Rabbah 9:5), and judged in the perspective of the whole, it must be accepted as necessary and beneficent.

We must now turn our gaze inward, to examine the qualitative nature of man's behavior. It is all too often a melancholy story. It abounds in falls and in frightful wrongs which man has visited on himself and on his fellow man. But those who have based on this an indictment of man, who have proclaimed a doctrine of human depravity, have been hasty in their conclusions. They have sometimes been guided by false criteria in judging man, or they have mistaken immaturity for perversity.

Man is often self-centered; he does not readily respond with self-sacrificial love for the welfare of others. This is often a grievous failure. There are moments when it is man's duty, as dictated by moral claims, to surrender his life for the

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sake of a higher goal. Human nature in action shows ample evidence of man's capacity for self-sacrifice. He sacrifices for his family, for his country, for ideals that have come to command his loyalty. Indeed man sometimes sacrifices himself much too readily, endowing certain causes with a claim to absolute loyalty of which they are really unworthy. How many have given absolute loyalty to their tribe, their nation, their race, their social class?

Countless victims offered themselves voluntarily to the false gods of Nazism and Communism in our time, and other generations have known and served other false gods. Man is capable of committing his life for what he regards a higher service. His problem is that he does not always know by what criteria to determine which is the higher service worthy of such devotion from him.

In the normal pace of events man is concerned with himself, with his own needs and purposes, which he gives a priority over those of other men. But this is consistent with the claims of morality. The Bible (Leviticus 19:18) demands of us: "And you shall love your neighbor as yourself." It does not demand that we love our neighbor more than we love our self. Such a demand would have been unnatural, and morality is rooted only in the possible.

The Bible assumes that a person loves himself as a prior condition; it only asks us to endeavor and approximate that love by the love for others to which we are summoned. Indeed, as modern psychiatry teaches us, a person who does not love himself cannot love any one else. Much of the cruelty practiced by men against their neighbors derives from a self-hatred which extends its negative energies from the self to the outer world.

Erich Fromm noted this when he declared: "The affirma-

tion of one's own life, happiness, growth, freedom, is rooted in one's capacity to love. . . . If an individual is able to love productively, he loves himself too; if he can love *only* others, he cannot love at all. . . . The selfish person does not love himself too much but too little; in fact he hates himself." ⁴

The love of self becomes evil when it is exclusive, when it halts at the frontier of the self. It is against this that the Bible admonishes us. It asks us to extend the frontier, to go beyond the self in our life of love. We normally extend it to the family, but our text asks that we extend it to a neighbor.

Who is the neighbor whom we are asked to love? Jewish tradition, in its final confrontation of this demand, enlarges it to include the whole world. Rabbi Akiba who regarded the verse commanding the love of neighbor as the most comprehensive statement of the entire Torah is also quoted in the *Ethics of the Fathers* (3:18) as saying: "Beloved is man [the Hebrew is *adam*, the most generic term for man] since he was created in the divine image." Rabbi Akiba, in other words, defines neighbor as *any man*. All men share the distinction of having been created in God's image, and they all have a claim on our love. The love of neighbor proceeds, however, not by obliterating self-love but by expanding the self to include the rest of the world. The *Ethics of the Fathers* (1:14) expresses it neatly in the well-known epigram: "If I am not for myself, who will be? But if I am for myself only, what am I?"

Man has the capacity to become aggressive in defending himself. When he judges his interests to be at stake, his family to be endangered, his country or his religion to be menaced, or even when he finds his ideas challenged by the advocacy of contrary ideas, he may raise his voice or his fist.

⁴ Erich Fromm: *The Art of Loving* (New York: Harper and Brothers; 1956), p. 60.

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But this instinctive response in self-defense is part of the endowment given to each creature to defend its individuality against submergence by the rest of creation. An individual person is unique and irreplaceable. If it is important to defend another person when threatened, is it not a prior obligation to defend one's self?

We may misapply this instinct. It is a mark of man's immaturity that he sees threats to himself where threats do not exist. The course of civilization shifts in accordance with the shifting perception of the "enemy." At first it was the member of another clan, then of another city, of another country, of another race, of another religious community. The time will come when he shall discover that all life is fractional, that we need one another in order to attain greater completion, that the very differences which mark man from man, civilization from civilization, are the elements which are needed to balance and to fructify one another through harmonious interaction.

That day will come. It is part of the messianic vision which must be an essential element in any faith that is to sustain man's hope. It does not mean that we envision a state when tensions between differing individuals will cease altogether. Unique individuals will always create unique civilizations, and each will need to speak for its own unique self, as a member of an orchestra must lovingly tend to his own portion in the music of the ensemble. But those tensions can be expressed with good will, as they are among friends who know that an underlying harmony binds them beyond their differences, who appreciate one another precisely because each represents some measure of the resources of living absent in the other.

Man has appetites, hungers, some expressing the claims of his bodily nature. He wants food and shelter and the things

by which these can be acquired. He has an urge for sexual gratification. Some whose views have been conditioned by Hellenistic ideas, exalting the spirit at the expense of the body, have called these sinful. But, from a Jewish point of view, this is a perverse philosophy. Certainly man can be lost in pursuing these claims, and they will destroy him. But it is not these claims as such that will destroy, but rather his unwise response to them. God has given us bodily natures, and when we deny the body its due we destroy the total capacity of the person to function and to bring forth the potential which remains asleep in his nature.

The mortification of the flesh, the ascetic withdrawal from the world is not a contribution to the spiritual life of man; it is rather his impoverishment. Maimonides said (*Guide* III, 27): "The well-being of the body . . . is anterior in nature and time. The latter object is required first because the well-being of the soul can only be attained after that of the body has been secured; for a person that is suffering from great hunger, thirst, heat or cold, cannot grasp an idea even if communicated by others, much less can he arrive at it by means of his own reasoning. But when a person is in possession of the first perfection, then he may possibly acquire the second perfection, which is undoubtedly of a superior kind and is alone the source of eternal life."

Whatever the Lord has made is intrinsically good; whatever He planted in our nature is directed toward a good purpose. No area of life illustrates this more profoundly than sex. Considering the onerous commitments which a mate assumes to his partner, a powerful drive is needed to overcome a person's clinging to privacy, to singleness. This drive is present in the call to sexual gratification felt by all creatures at certain stages in their development. Sexual union is the con-

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vergence of divine energy on its continuing objective to create and perfect life. Rabbi Moses ben Nahman wrote in his *Igeret Ha-Kodesh* (*Letter on Holiness*): "The act of sexual union is holy and pure. . . . The Lord created all things in accordance with His wisdom and whatever He created cannot possibly be shameful and ugly. . . . When a man is in union with his wife in a spirit of holiness and purity, the Divine Presence is with them." The very first Commandment of the Torah, set forth in Genesis 1:28 is: "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it." The basic imperatives of life are written in the human heart no less than in the texts of Scriptures.

The painful dilemma of man is to discover the golden mean, the proper direction he is to give each claim in his nature. This is a prize he must earn at great cost, and he must enlist toward its achievement all the resources open to his life, the fruits of reason and revelation and the knowledge gained through experience, his own and that of the race. He must consult the wisdom of the philosophers and the intuitions of artists. As a Jew he can study in the school for holiness which is represented by the Torah and the Commandments. The drives operative in our natures are of the most general character. Like the grain grown in nature which waits for man's refinement before yielding its fullest benefit, so must our instincts be refined and not be permitted to play their part in a raw and undisciplined state. But the presence of those drives in our nature is not a defect in man, it is one of the vital endowments given us by a beneficent God and intended for our good.

The raw or unrefined play of the instinct is what is sometimes described in Jewish tradition as the *yetzer ha-ra*, the so-called "evil inclination." It is balanced by what has been

called the *yetzer ha-tov*, "the good inclination." The Rabbis denied that there is anything intrinsically evil in man, for God would not have fashioned what is wholly evil. It is evil only in the sense that it is often misdirected. The Rabbis present this thought in commenting on Genesis 1:31: "And God saw everything that He had made and behold, it was very good." "Very good," the Rabbis explained, referred to the two impulses, the *yetzer ha-tov* and *yetzer ha-ra*, the good impulse and the evil impulse. But it was asked: "How can the evil impulse be called very good?" The answer given was: "Were it not for that impulse, a man would not build a house, marry a wife, beget children, or conduct business affairs" (Bereshit Rabbah 9:7).

The battle for man's moral refinement is a battle between these two impulses. The so-called evil impulse presses us to follow its way without regard to the limiting and refining considerations that are to describe its proper expression. The good impulse cautions us in the name of these refinements, asking us to set bounds and conditions for the fulfillment of our gratifications. It reminds us of other values that might be at stake, and if we do not listen, it continues to speak to us, to rebuke us for our failure, and to fill us with remorse. The tug of war goes on in all men. The evil impulse holds us in bondage to the self that we habitually are, while the good impulse bids us to transcend it. At other times when we become subject to strong passions which seek to break the dikes of our behavior patterns and destroy the refinements built around our instincts, then the good impulse plays a conservative part, bidding us to hold these dikes and not to permit them to yield to the sweep of raw and undisciplined energy.

This is a struggle which truly tests a man. Ben Zoma said (Avot 4:1): "Who is mighty? He who controls his passions;

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and so is it written in Proverbs 16:32, 'He who is master over his own spirit is mightier than he who conquers a city.' "

Both impulses are subtle in their operation. The evil impulse has in its armory all kinds of powerful weapons to deceive man and keep him in bondage to his baser self. It whispers enticing words casting all kinds of allure over the zone that is forbidden. It can rationalize its propositions and robe them in seemingly virtuous trappings. And once a person yields it weaves a fabric of habit, strong and unbending, to keep in bondage to itself, so that he can extricate himself only at the cost of the greatest exertions.

But let no one underestimate the weapons in possession of the good impulse. It affects those it seeks to heal with all kinds of therapeutic afflictions. Those who lead empty, uncreative lives it smites with boredom and with a sense of emptiness in life. Those who transgress, it smites with a sense of guilt. It fills some lives with a discontent with themselves and their world and sends them dreaming, yearning for something better than what exists.

Man is born with original sin, in the sense that the "evil impulse" begins its operations as soon as life begins. But this is only half the story. Man is also endowed with original virtue, and from the moment he is born the "good impulse" begins to propel him toward the heights.

Modern psychology has dwelt at length on this subject, testifying to this dual aspect of man's nature. John Dewey and James H. Tufts put it thus: "Confining ourselves for the moment to the native psychologic equipment, we may say that man is endowed with instinctive promptings which naturally (that is, without the intervention of deliberation or calculation) tend to preserve the self, and to develop his powers; and which equally . . . tend to bind the self closer to others and

to advance the interests of others. . . . Any given individual is naturally an erratic mixture of fierce insistence upon his own welfare and of profound susceptibility to the happiness of others—different individuals varying much in the respective intensities and proportions of the two tendencies.”⁵ Even Sigmund Freud, who has often spoken of the dark forces operative in human nature, concedes a wide range of nobility in man. “It is no part of our intention,” he declared, “to deny the nobility in human nature. . . . We dwell upon the evil in human beings with a greater emphasis only because others deny it, thereby making the mental life of mankind not indeed better but incomprehensible.”⁶ One psychologist has read these tendencies in the very beginnings of organic life: “When the first living cell divided to form two cells, when it gave up its life for two others, we have the beginnings of altruism. . . . Altruism is in the very nature of living matter . . . an integral part of life.”⁷

Man as he is yields many clues to his greatness. But he is only a fraction of himself. He is still a creature in transition. Many qualities of moral excellence lie dormant in his nature, waiting to reveal themselves as man attains a greater maturing. Only as man succeeds more fully in refining his “raw” nature will we be able to judge what it means to be truly human.

As the noted scientist Alexis Carrel has expressed it: “Man is simultaneously a material object, a living being, a focus of mental activities. His presence in the prodigious void of inter-sidereal spaces is totally negligible. But he is no stranger in

⁵ John Dewey and James H. Tufts: *Ethics* (New York: Henry Holt and Company; 1932), p. 43.

⁶ Sigmund Freud: *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis* (trans. J. Riviere) (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd.; 1952), p. 123.

⁷ G. B. Cutten: *Instincts and Religion* (New York: Harper and Brothers; 1940), p. 43.

the realms of inanimate matter. With the aid of mathematical abstractions his mind apprehends the electrons as well as the stars. . . . He appertains to the surface of the earth, exactly as trees, plants and animals do. . . . But he also belongs to another world. A world which, although enclosed within himself, stretches beyond space and time. And of this world, if his will is indomitable, he may travel over the infinite cycles. The cycle of Beauty, contemplated by scientists, artists and poets. The cycle of Love, that inspires heroism and renunciation. The cycle of Grace, ultimate reward of those who passionately seek the principle of all things. Such is our universe.”⁸

⁸ Alexis Carrel: *Man, The Unknown* (New York: Harper and Brothers; 1935), p. 320.



VI



The Pain and the Gain

SENSITIVE PEOPLE have often looked at the world and found themselves disillusioned by it. The panorama of human existence is large and varied, but the problem of suffering is a large part of it. Pain, frustration, death—these are ever-present. The author of Ecclesiastes was not alone in his lamenting, “Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.”

Why does God permit suffering? Why did God design a world in which so much evil is permitted to flourish? Some philosophies, to reconcile the existence of God with the presence of evil in the world, have withdrawn the experience of what we call evil from God’s providence. In various dualistic religions, evil is traced to the work of an evil force operative on man, which is independent of God and antagonistic to His purpose. This, for instance, is the position of the religion of Zoroaster, which is still a factor in the world’s religious thought. In Christian Science, we have another kind of solu-

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tion to this problem, but similar in that it dissociates God from the world's evil. Christian Science regards evil as the result of negative thoughts; it enters man's consciousness through fallacious thinking. One who knows how to shed the errors of mortal mind lives in a realm which is all good.

Judaism has insisted on God's undiminished sovereignty over all realms of existence. It sees Him as the cause of all existence, including the experiences of frustration and death. The prophet Isaiah expressed this in its most general terms when he declared in the name of God (Isaiah 45:6, 7): "I am the Lord, and there is none else; I form the light, and create darkness, I make peace, and create evil. I am the Lord who doeth all these things." How can we reconcile the existence of evil with the belief in a God who is powerful and all-good and who created the world for a beneficent purpose?

What makes our problem especially challenging is that there appears to be no correlation between virtue and happiness. It is the good who sometimes endure the greatest suffering, while evil-doers in many cases live out their years in tranquility and peace. The authors of the Bible, brave and outspoken thinkers who knew no timidity in stating a problem when they saw one, spoke some of the harshest words in protest against the apparent mismanagement in God's government of the world. One remembers the pathetic outcry of Jeremiah (12:1):

Right wouldst Thou be, O Lord,
Were I to contend with Thee,
Yet will I reason with Thee:
Wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper?
Wherefore are all they secure that deal very treacherously?

The problem of evil preoccupied the minds of Jewish thinkers throughout the centuries. One of the earliest and noblest discussions of this problem is found in the Bible, in the book of Job. The prologue to the book makes it clear that it is intended to serve as a parable, to explore a man's faith in the face of the trials which come his way. The Rabbis acknowledged that this story is not a chronicle of a real person's life in suffering and in faith. As one of them put it (Bava Batra 15a), "There never was a character like Job; Job is an allegory." The power of the book is in the cogency with which it sees the problem, in the eloquence with which it states the issues involved, and in the frankness with which it proclaims its challenge to God and man.

The book of Job portrays its hero as a good and noble man who, without reason, is struck by tragedy. He loses his possessions, his children; his own body is afflicted with a loathsome disease. Job endures much, but his faith remains unshaken. In the end, however, he begins to rebel. His friends, who came to console him, recoil from his rebellion; they tell him to look more critically at himself and he will discover in his own sins, perhaps those deeply hidden, the cause of his misfortune. Job knows his integrity, and he refuses to heed them. God finally reveals Himself to rebuke Job's friends, who had been so ready to assume that a man's suffering must necessarily prove his guilt.

God answers Job by marshaling the stupendous panorama of the wonders of nature to remind him that much of life is a mystery to a mortal mind. We do not understand everything. We do not abandon our sense of order in the realm of nature, even though there is much in the physical world that eludes our understanding. Similarly on encountering experiences which appear to defy our sense of a moral order, we

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dare not yield to the thought that capriciousness or indifference to moral values is at the heart of the universe.

Job's mind was then set at peace.

The resignation preached by the author of Job is part of the wisdom we need to face life. Humility becomes a man when he faces what he cannot know. Man is man, and God is God. The mind of a mortal cannot break through the mystery of God's ways. We see only a fragment in space and time; and the fullest unfolding of God's design is beyond our knowing. How can we challenge the propriety of a plan unless we see it whole? The things we know of God, said Job (26:14), "are but the outskirts of His ways. And how small a whisper is heard of Him! But the thunder of His mighty deeds who can understand?"

Much of the suffering we witness in life often eludes our understanding, but Jewish tradition has contributed much to make suffering intelligible within the design of a beneficent God.

Sometimes suffering functions as a control, built into the texture of our being, which goes into action whenever life is imperiled. The child suffers pain whenever something disturbs him, and he has the instinctive device to communicate his disturbance. He can cry. Instinctive, too, is the parents' response to that cry. A parent can hear with tolerance any noise, but a child's cry makes him drop every preoccupation to attend to the child's needs. The capacity to suffer and to communicate his suffering saves the child from every manner of sickness. It contributes to the preservation of his life.

Our condition changes as we grow toward maturity, but suffering retains its place among the devices provided by the Creator for the preservation of life. When some vital disturbance has set into our bodies or our minds, the control of

suffering begins to act. We feel ill, we are troubled. When we eat the wrong food, when we pursue injurious habits, when we dissipate our energies on an excess of luxuries and bodily pleasures, when we become self-centered and live indolently, doing nothing significant with ourselves, when we hate rather than love our fellow humans, when we are false to friends and family, the control of suffering will soon begin to work. We may suffer aches and pains in various parts of the body, or we may suffer in the "invisible parts," in the mind, the soul. The sufferings of the mind are more difficult to diagnose but they are no less real; they may take the form of boredom, of inner depression, of a sense of emptiness in life, or they may take on the form of a sense of guilt or disgust with oneself.

A grown person cries at times, as does a child, but tears are not primarily his means of redress. He must take measures to relieve the condition that oppresses him. He must change his way of life, abandon the conditions that have produced his disturbance and bring his life into greater harmony with the laws ordained by God for the government of human existence. Sufferings born of a failure to heed the laws by which life is governed are sufferings of retribution. They are the consequences of misconduct, and they are for the person's own benefit, to steer him away from evil and toward the good.

There are times when the evil done is not personal; it is the collective evil of a society in action, and the individual suffers incidentally, as a member of society. A slum in the corner of a calloused city breeds crime or disease, and others, besides those who live in it and those responsible for civic neglect, suffer the evil it breeds. A parent leads a reckless life, and the child suffers the disgrace; or vice versa, a child turns upon an evil course, and the parent suffers the disgrace. We are part

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of one another, and suffering becomes diffused, engulfing those not directly responsible for the condition which produced it. The mouth eats the poisonous food, but the whole body becomes infected with disease. Society is like an individual organism: The deed of one part begets consequences shared by all others.

The diffusion of suffering means, of course, also a diffusion of responsibility. Every member of society must be concerned with rectifying the evils which exist therein. In the final analysis, no one is immune from the consequence of evil, and the failure to resist evil, though we are not directly touched by it, becomes a form of wrongdoing which brings the principle of retribution to work against us. When Nazism was young it struck only against the Jews. The responsibility for resisting it was the world's responsibility, and because the world looked on in passive acquiescence, the evil became bolder and diffused itself over a larger area of mankind. The result was war and catastrophe, from which we have not fully recovered as yet. Suffering endured on this level is still a result of misconduct; it is the result of the principle of retribution asserting itself against us.

There are times when suffering is not the result of misconduct. No discernible action has taken place in violation of the moral standard of a community. But a variety of disturbances appear in some lives, which in turn leads to large social upheavals. History offers repeated testimony of this process in action. No external force disturbs a community, but a revolutionary spirit appears, and the challenge is presented from within. Some new pattern of religious, economic, or political life is projected, and people are suddenly torn by an inner strife between the advocates of the new and the partisans of the old.

The same process may appear in a person's private life. On the surface all may appear to be at peace, but a storm may be gathering within. Eventually it erupts in an inner restlessness and conflict. Part of us wants to cling to the old life, and another part of us abhors the old, pressing us to throw away the familiar and embark on something different. Caught in this conflict, our world becomes disturbed by tensions; we are robbed of peace.

The Rabbis speak of such suffering as tokens of "God's love." For the disturbance of a world crystallized at any particular level is an asset for the cause of human progress. Such a world is surely not the ultimate in what the world can be. The goal of life is endlessly to strive for perfection, and it takes a disturbance of our peace to jolt us out of our lethargy and send us forth to seek the new beckoning on the horizon. Without such disturbance we would remain stagnant and complacent. We are saved from stagnation by challenging discontent. The good must some day lose its appeal for us that we may be ready to pursue what is better for which the time has come.

A parent who does not disturb his child with challenging demands but allows him to remain as he is, in peace, does not thereby show him parental affection. Greater affection is shown by the parent who prods his child toward high purposes even though the way to their achievement is beset with incidental hardships. "God," said Rabbi Saadiah Gaon (Commentary on Proverbs 3:11), "is like a father who subjects his son to painful experiences for his own good, whether to heal him of some disease or to teach him writing, mathematics, or some craft or commerce."

There is another contribution of suffering to the struggle against evil. Suffering is the means by which we are confirmed

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in our devotion to virtue and our dissociation from evil. This is accomplished in the "testing" of character, to which God occasionally subjects His faithful.

Morality would be meaningless if there were an immediate reward to virtue. A virtue that carries with it an immediate practical return is indeed no virtue at all. It is in the willingness to pursue virtue without the expectation of reward that a genuine morality begins. But no one knows before he is tested how far his love for what is right will enable him to resist temptations to choose evil. Every person then must go through certain situations that "test" his character. It is in such tests that character is authenticated and deepened. And it is in successfully meeting such tests that patterns of behavior are established to show forth to the world the true measure of devotion to God and His law of which the human spirit is capable.

The classic test of character was the Binding of Isaac, in which Abraham and his son Isaac were called to demonstrate the highest devotion of God's faithful. The test was met when Abraham was ready to sacrifice his beloved son Isaac and when Isaac himself concurred in this resolution. The sacrifice was never carried out because the will to perform it was a sufficient fulfillment of the test.

There are times when suffering is the price we pay for a redemptive mission which has been laid on us. It is God's way to redeem people from falsehood and wrongdoing through the ministry of His chosen servants. He pours of His spirit upon certain chosen individuals and sends them forth with a sense of consecration to the cause of leading their fellow men to a higher truth, to a better way of life. But the world resists such efforts; and those who came to save the world are fated to suffer hardship. Abraham's service to God

began with the call to uproot himself from family and country and to live as a wanderer and as a stranger. Joseph understood and accepted his sufferings when he came to the realization that through them he was able to become the ruler in Egypt and thus the deliverer of his brethren (Genesis 45:5-8). One thinks of frustrations suffered by Moses and by all the prophets in the course of their ministry. A prophet is not without honor, but in his own time and place he is often an abused man.

The most universal application of this doctrine was given by Isaiah, who employed it to account for the harassments and humiliations suffered by the Jewish people. As the chosen vehicle of God's word, Israel was the servant of the Lord, whose very service brought upon him incidental suffering. But such suffering is to be borne as a mark of distinction, for it is a measure of the service being rendered in a great cause. It is the evil in an unregenerate world that inspires its resistance to its would-be savior. The sufferings of the Lord's servant who has come to save it is therefore the means by which it gradually finds its own healing. For the Lord's servant himself, however, the knowledge of the cause he serves vindicates the sufferings endured.

The Rabbis expound this doctrine in discussing the Binding of Isaac: "What does the Psalmist mean by saying (Psalms 11:5) 'The Lord tries the righteous'? Rabbi Jonah said: Flax improves as it is pounded on but only when it is of good quality. When it is of bad quality, it will split if one pounds on it. Similarly God brings trial only on the righteous. Rabbi Judah bar Shalom said: A potter does not tap to test a defective vessel, lest it break. Does he not tap the good vessel? Similarly God does not test the wicked, but only the righteous, as it is written, The Lord tests the righteous. Rabbi Elazar

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said: The case parallels the master who owns a healthy ox and a weak ox; will he not put the yoke on the good ox? Therefore, it is written, The Lord tries the righteous. And therefore it is also written, And the Lord tested Abraham" (Midrash *Tanhuma*, *Vayera* 20).

In what sense are we to understand Isaiah's declaration that God is the Creator of evil? Maimonides puts it this way (*Guide* III, 10): "He creates evil only in so far as He produces the corporeal element such as it actually is." It is because man is as he is, a mortal creature, deficient in wisdom and virtue, that he must grapple with the problem of evil. But man's condition is a determinant of God. It is God who willed it that man should be as he is, a creature who must learn and grow through slow and painful experience.

Theoretically God might have designed a different kind of world, in which suffering would have been unnecessary. God might have made us perfect, with an instinctive knowledge of the right action in every situation and an instinctive readiness to follow the right course wherever it leads. Then we would have been spared so much of the grief we now know in life. We would then automatically eat the right food and in the right measure, and we would say the right word and never blunder into false or thoughtless utterance; knowing everything, we would at once find the remedy to every sickness. We would know how to solve our personal problems and the world's problems; we would be free of doubt and of ignorance; we would be all-wise and all good by the automatic workings of our nature.

The only trouble is that in such a world there would be nothing for man to do. Life would be reduced to the performance of an automaton. Life's glory is the fact that we are deficient, that we can struggle for perfection. Life's glory is

that we have a role in the making of our destinies, that our lives and the life of our society are subject to creative shaping by our own labor. A world wholly perfect would relieve us of suffering, but it would also rob us of the privilege of serving as God's partners in the creative direction of our life. God apparently left a realm of chaos in ourselves and in the world to permit us the opportunity of striving with Him to reduce the chaos and to impose upon it ever greater harmony. We suffer when we languish in the chaos. We suffer that we might resist it.

Theoretically God might step in each time we are on the verge of uttering a falsehood or committing an evil deed. But once again life would lose all creative challenge. Life is meaningful because we are free to choose, because we can grow to choose truth and goodness in free decision, as uncoerced expressions of our character.

A parent who wants his child to grow toward mature manhood or womanhood will often "shrink" his love for his child to permit him to face a problem with his own resources, to blunder if necessary, but to learn from his own experiences. A parent could theoretically carry his child across a busy lane of traffic or lead him by the hand, but the "overprotected" child will never learn to face the hazards of walking on his own feet, with only his own mind to guide him. The parent will, therefore, as a boon to his child, expose him to the hazards of life unaided and unprotected. In some instances the child will injure himself, but a wise parent will take that chance. For the price of "overprotecting" his child is the greater evil; it will impede the child's growing up and learning to face life on his own.

God also takes a chance with His children. He has withdrawn His providence from them, to create a zone of free in-

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initiative where they will act on their own. They often act foolishly and bring mischief to themselves and to others, but there is no alternative. It is the only way we can grow in understanding and acquire maturity. The child often stumbles before he can stand erect. He may fall and hurt himself. But it is only by stumbling and falling that he will learn to stand erect.

We are living in a time of the world's immaturity. In the perspective of life's evolution on this planet, the human episode is but a recent appearance. And in our immaturity we have indeed wrought much tragedy upon ourselves. Should God paralyze the hand of every perpetrator of crime before the crime is done? Should he snuff out the brain of everyone who schemes violence? Freedom can be deadly, as when it is exercised by a Torquemada or a Hitler. But if its prevention consisted in the canceling out altogether of the meaning of the human adventure, then the remedy would be even more bitter than the disease. The world is meant to continue on its course; people are free to do evil and to suffer its consequences and slowly to learn the truths that will finally make them free.

Human suffering is a grave price to pay for human folly, but in God's design this suffering becomes the energizing element that facilitates the birth of God's kingdom of righteousness and peace. The tears and suffering of the ages energize the momentum that has sent man on the road toward the heights. As man attains maturity he will gradually overcome the follies and evils that now mar his life. We shall never reach a state where life will be completely free of tensions or problems, for that would beget inertness and death. But we shall rise out of the immense evils which impose so much needless suffering. War, poverty, and prejudice, according to Jewish tradition, can be overcome. And it is the goal of hu-

man history to overcome them. The goal of all human striving is the establishment of a new world order, the messianic age of universal justice, freedom, and peace for all mankind.

The golden age is ahead of us. Whether we know it or not, we move toward its realization on roads both easy and rough. And the pains endured on the way are the price we are paying for the privilege of the journey and for the noble destination toward which our journey will eventually take us.

The capacity to suffer is the price we pay for being human, and the higher we rise on the scale of humanity the more extended becomes our exposure to suffering. A stone can suffer less than a plant, and a plant less than an animal, and an animal less than a person. In man's life too we may measure the scale of human qualities attained by sensitivity to suffering. When we destroy part of the attribute that makes us human, as occurs when a portion of the brain is removed surgically in a lobotomy, we reduce the capacity to suffer.

Suffering is the price paid for every achievement, from a child's new tooth to the insight that makes us build safer homes, more hygienic cities, and more equitable economic and social systems and that eventually will prod us to build a righteous and lasting peace. And as the *Ethics of the Fathers* (5:26) reminds us, "the gain is in proportion to the pain."



VII



The Love of God and the Fear of God

THERE IS a law written into the texture of all creatures that they turn in adoration to the source from which they derive their being and draw the sustenance for their life. A child turns toward his mother; a dog looks in worshipful adoration at his master. A parallel response is exhibited in other realms of life. Does not a plant turn toward the sun and the roots of a tree twist and turn toward the sources of nourishment beneath the earth to make themselves more receptive to the precious stuff that will sustain their life?

What is the ultimate source of our being? The child centers his devotion on his mother. But what happens when the child becomes a man and knows that mother love itself is only an incident in the larger miracle by which the Creator has provided for the maintenance of all life? When a man becomes

aware of God's existence and His providential ordering of all life, he turns to Him in a comparable response. This introduces us to the emotional side of religion. It consists of man's response to God, the Creator and Sustainer of his life and that of the world about him. The response consists of two primary emotions or feelings, love as well as fear.

The emotional response to God is in some respects automatic, rather than consciously willed. The knowledge that we are dependent on God and that God is indeed dependable to us ignites into adoration. Like all love, the love of God makes great demands on us, but it enlarges our life and fills it with a secret joy. It assures us that we are not alone in the universe; it meets even more than a human love can, what Erich Fromm has called, "the deepest need of man," the need "to overcome his separateness, to leave the prison of his aloneness." It does more. It assures him of God's reciprocal love, which in turn gives him the feeling of security and peace, knowing that his life is in good hands and that he may venture safely to the bewildering universe where he is to make his home.

The Bible commands the love of God as the primary virtue man must cultivate. It is proclaimed in the opening sentence of the *Shema*, following the prefatory declaration calling for the acknowledgment of God's sovereignty and His unity (Deuteronomy 6:4): "Hear, O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and all your might."

The introductory sentence of the *Shema* is sometimes rendered: "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one." But most Jewish commentators make it clear that a double acknowledgment is sought here. We are asked first to acknowledge the Lord, *YHVH*, as our God. There were many deities to whom ancient man gave his allegiance. The religion which

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broke on the world through the call of Abraham and in whose name Moses led the Israelites to Sinai was centered in the repudiation of those deities and in acknowledging instead one universal sovereign, whose name *YHVH*, as we noted, proclaims Him the Creator, the Sustainer, and the Redeemer. We call Him "the Lord" because deference prohibits us from pronouncing His proper name.

The second acknowledgment is that of His unity. By this is meant that His sovereignty is inclusive of all realms of existence, that one law, expressive of His will, unites all things in an underlying harmony, despite their apparent separateness, dissonance, and conflict.

Following the call to this double acknowledgment there is the call to love God. In what sense can love be commanded? Emotions cannot be assumed at will. To be genuine they must arise spontaneously in the heart. Maimonides explained that it is indeed possible actively to pursue love by pursuing the conditioning factors which precipitate love. Love cannot be assumed at will, but we can will to pursue those actions which create the setting for love to arise. We have noted that the love of God is a by-product of our knowledge of His beneficent rule over our lives and over the world which is our home. The pursuit of such knowledge, the quest to know God's ways, to discern His wisdom and His goodness, is therefore an obligation deriving from the command to love Him. The commandment to love God, according to Maimonides (*Sefer Ha-Mitzvot*, Positive Commandment 3), includes all the preliminary steps by which it may be attained; it includes the call "to contemplate His commandments and His utterances and His works till we comprehend Him and feel utmost delight in our comprehension of Him, and this is the love concerning which we are obligated."

It is a far-ranging task to which we are thus summoned by the call to love God. The call to contemplation which is to yield the knowledge that will in turn be transmuted to love includes the study of the Torah. The contemplation of "His commandments and His utterances" refers to the study of God's revealed word, whose foundation stone is the Bible. The Bible is not a work of philosophy nor is the Talmud. But these are primary documents in man's encounter with God. The Bible has educated the human soul toward God-consciousness through the long centuries, and it has spoken cogently to peoples of every race, language, nationality, and cultural background. Beyond the Bible lies the Talmud, and beyond these lie vast strata of other writings, the works of poets, philosophers, and moralists, each of whom has some contribution to make to our task of fashioning a context of comprehension which in turn will lead us to that higher state of loving God.

For Maimonides, however, the intellectual pursuits, preliminary to the knowledge of God, were not limited to the Torah. They included a study of "His works," which refers to the study of nature, pursued through the studies of philosophy and science. It is the study of God's works as revealed in the natural order which help to establish for us His wisdom and His goodness. The natural order is another "Scripture" in which man can decipher God's ways in governing the world. These studies must therefore be pursued, in addition to the study of the Torah, as part of the quest for that knowledge which will in turn beget in us the love of God.

The truth, of course, is that all knowledge is ultimately an antecedent to God's love. For all knowledge is interrelated and illumines some dimension of the mystery of existence.

The knowledge of nature, pursued through the tools of sci-

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entific inquiry, reveals the hidden principles by which objects in the universe interact. It enables us to evolve formulae reducible to simple mathematical symbols defining the different states of matter in motion. But, man also knows another order of being, the order of quality or value, which is probed through religion and through the arts, through literature, through painting, and through music.

The wonder of existence which inspires the heart to the love of God is spelled out in the context of the whole, when every aspect of existence is related to every other. The perfection of a plan is seldom revealed in a detail when viewed in detachment from the plan as a whole. It is from the perspective of the whole that we can glimpse the wisdom implicit in the plan and the greater wisdom of the mind in which it was conceived.

The scandal of our age is the splintering of our world into specialized zones, each an object of concern to its own set of specialists. The *wholeness* of existence is lost in this process of splintering. The greatest offenders against the wholeness of life, according to the noted Spanish philosopher José Ortega y Gasset, are the practitioners of modern science. "Scientific truth is characterized by its exactness and the rigorous quality of its assumptions. . . . But experimental science is only a meager portion of the mind and the organism. Where it stops, man does not stop. . . . The past century tried very hard to rein in the human mind and hold it in check within the limits set by exactness. This violence, this turning the back on ultimate problems, was called 'agnosticism.' Such an effort is neither justified nor plausible. . . . That experimental science may be incapable of resolving those fundamental problems, is no reason why it should behave like the fox with the high-hung grapes, should call them 'myths' and invite us to abandon

them. How can we live deaf to the last, dramatic questions? Where does the world come from, whither is it going? What is the definitive power in the cosmos? What is the essential meaning of life? Confined to a zone of intermediate and secondary themes, we cannot breathe. We need a complete perspective, with foreground and background, not a maimed and partial landscape, not a horizon from which the lure of the great distances has been cut away. . . . Insoluble though they be, these questions will continue to rise, pathetic, on the clouded vault of the night, blinking at us like the twinkle of a star. . . .”¹

The truth is that science has not only sinned, it has also been sinned against. Those of a more romantic temperament, those immersed in the contemplation of ultimate questions, have on occasion resisted the work of the scientist. The sin of parochialism, like every other sin, is not confined to any one community of men.

We travel to the love of God by the road of knowledge, but there is no guarantee that having embarked on that road we will necessarily reach our destination. The sites across which we must journey are often alluring, and they tempt us to linger. Some yield and linger on the way and never reach the journey's end. Our hands grasp fragments of truth, and what we grasp is rich and absorbing, and we forget that it is only a fragment and revere it as though it were the whole. The natural scientist is disdainful of the poet, the poet is disdainful of the natural scientist, and both are disdainful of the theologian. The theologian often reciprocates in kind. He cultivates the articles of his faith assiduously but in detachment from the rest of life. Such parochialism may corrupt the study

¹ José Ortega y Gasset: *What Is Philosophy?* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company; 1960), pp. 65 f.

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of the Torah as well. The study of a particular text, of a particular theme in Talmudic law, may be pursued in detachment from the larger vision of God and His providence, leaving its devotee spiritually sterile, his relation to God no closer because of his endeavor.

Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook, the late chief Rabbi of Palestine, made much of this need to raise our culture to unity. He called for the integration of specialized knowledge, to see the wholeness of existence, and beyond the wholeness of existence he called for the greater vision, to see the presence of God who hovers over all things, endowing them with life, direction, and purpose. The dimension of the holy is the aspect assumed by finite things when they are seen in their relationship to the whole of existence and to the divine plan which is the context of their life.

Rabbi Kook quoted with approval the well-known maxim of the Gaon of Vilna: "For every measure of worldly knowledge which a man lacks he will lack in tenfold measure in his knowledge of the Torah." He called on the leaders of traditional Judaism in his time, for whom the Torah was the sole intellectual pursuit and for whom the Torah meant principally the study of the Talmud, to broaden their horizons, to reach out "for a wide knowledge of all branches of cultural pursuits which are preparatory to the knowledge of God."²

"One of the great afflictions of man's spiritual life," he wrote,³ "is the tendency of every branch of knowledge and experience to impede the disclosure of every other branch. The result of this is that most people remain afflicted with one-sidedness. This defect will not last forever. The future of

² Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook: *Igrot* (Jerusalem: Agudah Le-Hotzaat Sifre Ha-Rayah Kook; 1946), Vol. II, p. 232.

³ Rabbi Kook: *Orot Ha-Kodesh* (Jerusalem: Agudah Le-Hotzaat Sifre Ha-Rayah Kook; 1938), Vol. I, p. 22.

man's development is bound to reach a point when one branch of knowledge will no longer seem to negate every other, but when it will be discovered that each is a disclosure of the whole, in all its vastness and depth. For it is so, in truth; no spiritual essence stands by itself but it is interpenetrated by the whole. . . . When man rises to his true height his eyes will open to see things in true perspective. . . . Then will the earth be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea." Out of such knowledge will flow a mighty love that will possess the heart of all mankind.

The Rabbis (Berakhot 61b) took seriously the exhortation of Scripture to love God "with all your heart, with all your soul, and all your might." These phrases were not rhetoric; each is a useful qualification helping us to define the scope of the love which marks man's true response to God.

With all your heart, they said, means with the good as well as the evil inclination. We have discussed previously the meaning of the good and the so-called evil inclination in man. What the Rabbis meant in the present context is that we are to direct all our passions to the love of God, that we are to sublimate even our baser impulses, our personal ambitions and desires to His service.

With all your soul, they said, means with life itself. The Hebrew term for "your soul," *nafshekha*, means literally "your breath"; the exhortation therefore means that we are to love God to our last breath. This is the ultimate test of our love for God: When necessary, we must be ready to surrender life itself in affirmation of our love. The story of the *Akaydah*, or the Binding of Isaac, described in Genesis and read in the synagogue the second day of Rosh Hashanah expresses this theme. Abraham is tested to reveal how far his love for God extends. He meets the test by his readiness to sacrifice

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what is dearer to him than life itself, his dearly beloved son Isaac. A historical illustration of this conception of love for God is represented in the case of the martyrdom willingly suffered by Rabbi Akiba for the sake of God. He bore the most cruel tortures inflicted by the Roman executioner without flinching. The executioner was baffled by his calmness, and he asked him whether he did not suffer pain. Rabbi Akiba confessed that he did indeed suffer pain, but that he rejoiced because he found the strength to prove his love for God by giving his life on the altar of that love.

With all your might was applied to all one's possessions. One commentator was struck by the coincidental similarity of the Hebrew word for "might," *me'od*, to the word *midah*, which means "measure," and he applied it to "whatever measure is meted out to you." We are to love God, in other words, no matter what befalls us, in good or bad circumstances.

The fear of God derives from the experience in which love is nurtured. It is likewise a response to God's existence, to His work, as discernible in creation. Fear arises on two levels. There is what Jewish thinkers described as "the lower fear." It is the fear of God's wrath. Discovering the grimness of divine retribution, man is struck by fear of what will happen to him in consequence of his failings. No man need regard himself as wholly outside the need of this "lower fear," for one must surely be concerned with one's own life, and God judges us for what we have done and what we have failed to do. Guilt and suffering, the personalized expression of divine retribution, are close enough to every life to beget in us, when we reflect on our condition, a sense of anxiety. We must be afraid for ourselves and our world when we think of God's judgment.

There has always been a tendency in religion to belittle the "lower fear" because it is pragmatically motivated. But one of the functions of religion should be to sensitize us to suffering. It will be a fear that is deep enough, commensurate with the impending tragedy, that we hope will finally halt the world's reckless drift toward atomic war. "The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom," declares the book of Proverbs. It is not the end of wisdom but its beginning. Man needs to confront God on this level surely. He still has to take the steps that mark the beginning of wisdom.

The fear of God exists also on a higher level, and it is this fear which constantly informs the heart and mind of the spiritually mature person. On this level fear is really a sense of awe. It is a sense of wonder, of personal effacement before the grandeur of God. A related feeling which emanates from this is a sense of personal deficiency. All our attainments fall away, and in the perspective of God's perfection, we see ourselves as truly insignificant.

The love of God and the fear of God are the oscillations of the pendulum. But it is one emotion which stirs the pendulum and causes it to swing now in the one direction and now in the other. Maimonides has described the emotion which expresses itself now as love and now as fear (*Mishneh Torah, Yesoday Ha-Torah* 2:1, 2): "At the time when one reflects on His works, on His wonderful and stupendous creations, and from them perceives His wisdom which is incomparable and unbounded, he immediately loves, praises, glorifies and yearns with an ardent longing to know the great God. . . . And when one reflects upon these very things, he immediately starts back, is struck with fear and terror, and is conscious that he is a creature, insignificant, lowly, and immature, standing with only slight and scanty knowl-

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edge. As David said (Psalms 8:4-5): 'When I consider Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers, what is man that Thou art mindful of him?' "

The emotion of awe before God as described by Maimonides is analogous to what Albert Einstein has described as "cosmic religion." "The most beautiful and profound emotion we can experience," declared Dr. Einstein, "is the mystical. It is the source of all true art and science. He to whom this emotion is a stranger, who can no longer pause to wonder and stand rapt in awe, is as good as dead; his eyes are closed. This insight into the mystery of life, coupled though it be with fear, also has given rise to religion." The elements converging to create this sense of mystery, according to Einstein, are the experience of "the totality of existence as a unity far beyond existence." Einstein continues: "To know that what is impenetrable to us really exists, manifesting itself as the highest wisdom and most radiant beauty which our dull faculties can comprehend only in their primitive forms—this knowledge, this feeling is the center of true religiousness. In this sense and in this sense only, I belong to the ranks of devoutly religious men." ⁴

The Bible commands the fear of God in a context which indicates its connection with the love of God. Thus Deuteronomy 10:12, 13: "And now, O Israel, what does the Lord require of you, but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all His ways, and to love Him and to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and all your soul, to keep the commandments of the Lord and His statutes which I command you this day for your good?"

This sentence covers a good deal of ground, and it invites careful examination. It unites the fear of God and the love of

⁴ *The New York Times*, April 19, 1955, p. 25.

God. Its special interest to us lies however in the indication given of some of the consequences which derive from the love and the fear of God. It speaks of obedience to the commandments, but these are introduced by the call *to walk in His ways*. This is the initial consequence of the love and the fear of God. It is the instinctive tendency of man to emulate what he admires. The love for God does not remain a pure emotion. It overflows in several directions. One of them is in the quest to imitate the qualities we associate with God. The Rabbis define it thus (Sotah 14a): To walk in God's ways means to try and make one's self like Him; as He is merciful, so be you merciful, as He is gracious, so be you gracious.

The attributes of God's providence are described for us in Scripture; they are also embodied in the structure of life in the universe which is probed by science. From both sources we learn that at the heart of the universe, central to God's purpose, is the protection and perfection of life. This then becomes the supreme value for men to pursue, to be solicitous for the preservation of all life.

The prophet Micah summed up this demand succinctly when he said that what the Lord requires of man is "to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God." He who practices justice and mercy walks in God's ways. He walks *humbly* with God, because God is God, and what is man even when he tries to raise himself toward the divine standard?

These are summarized even more succinctly in Leviticus 19:2: "You shall be holy for I the Lord your God am holy." The golden rule, commanded in Leviticus 19:18, does not explicitly relate the love of man with the love of God, but it appears to imply it. For the command "And you shall love your neighbor as yourself" is at once followed by the declara-

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tion "I am the Lord." The term we render "Lord" is here, as elsewhere in Scripture, God's proper name, *YHVH*. The juxtaposition of the two tends to suggest that as God is *YHVH*, a name which proclaims His loving qualities in relation to His creatures, so He expects man to do likewise and to be loving in relation to his neighbor.

Jewish tradition sometimes speaks of man as God's "partner" in the work of creation. But this partnership really derives from man's endeavor to imitate God's work. God launched a universe into being, but He did not finish it. The process of subduing the chaos, of enthroning light over darkness still needs the energizing presence of divine, creative energy. It is man's supreme distinction that God has invited him to join with Him in the continued consummation of His plan.

A man carries in his heart an image of what he loves, and subtly it shapes his life. It directs his thought, it forms his ends. He gradually becomes what he envisions his ideal to be. The hero who embodies his ideal becomes the model after whom he remakes himself. He who loves God and fears Him has embarked on a great adventure. He will walk in God's ways wherever they will take him. The quest to emulate God is the root of the Jewish ethical system. This, as we shall have occasion to see, is one of the characteristics of Jewish ethics. The ethical deed does not hang in air as an enterprise by itself. It is related to the love of God and the fear of God which in turn are related to our knowledge of God, His existence, and His providence as revealed in the Torah and in that other Scripture, the universe about us.

The love and the fear of God overflow in two other directions which affect vitally the character of human behavior. One is the concept of *kiddush ha-Shem*, the "hallowing" of God's name, the other, *hillul ha-Shem*, the "desecration" of

God's name. Man is God's choicest creation. His conduct is therefore a reflection on his Creator. One who really loves God and fears Him will want his life to add glory to God. It is a natural reaction of a creature to glorify his beloved. It becomes similarly natural for a person to weigh his behavior, among other considerations, by what it will do to God's name. The highest goal is to glorify or "hallow" God's name; the evil to be avoided at all costs is that which will degrade or "desecrate" God's name.

Every person is of course a representative of the home in which he was raised and of the parents who gave him birth, and he is likewise a representative of the world, of God's design in action, of His wisdom in having fashioned life. The motifs of *kiddush ha-Shem* and *hillul ha-Shem* are therefore relevant for all people. But the Rabbis applied it with special urgency to the Jewish people. As the people of the Torah, in whose tradition the principles of ethical monotheism had first emerged, it was for them especially to exemplify a high standard in their conduct as befits the representatives of a great faith. Within the Jewish people they were especially exacting with the educated, those learned in the Torah. It is the knowledge of God that overflows into love and fear, and these in turn overflow into a way of life. Those who know and love God carry a greater responsibility to bear witness to their faith by the quality of their life.

There is another direction into which the love of God spills over—it is the channel of adoration. The person who feels deeply his love for God will seek to praise, glorify, to offer some token of gratitude for the privilege of his love. He will seek to declare his love in word and in deed. Thus the phenomenon of worship arises. The forms of worship are sociologically conditioned, by the lover's experience in his environment.

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But the urge to worship is rooted in our natures; it is an extension of our love for God. It is this fact which explains the sense of privilege and joy among those who are really devout. They rejoice because they have found an outlet for a surge of energy that has been released by an inner experience.

Worship has the capacity to strengthen our love for God, but it begins as an end rather than as a means. The act of adoration strengthens the love from which it flows, but its presence has an autonomous meaning. It is not only an incident in the quest for love, but a mark of its consummation.

The emphasis on the ethical implications of the love and fear of God is a characteristic of Judaism. We have called attention to a parochialism of the intellect, which expresses itself in the pursuit of fragmentary knowledge as though it encompassed the whole of reality. There is likewise an emotional parochialism. Love is often competitive. A man's love for his family may absorb him wholly so that he remains unconcerned for those outside his family circle. One's love for the things of the world, vocation, family, friends, country, may hold one in total thrall and inhibit his love for the Eternal One. But the converse is also true. The love of God may become competitive to the love of man. Expressions of piety are known in all religious traditions in which the love of God is cultivated with great passion, growing continuously in depth and detaching a man from all other pursuits, making him oblivious to the world of men and their problems.

Judaism was sensitive to this peril, and it inveighed against it often. The piety of ethically insensitive men was derided as a mockery. The ascetic who indulges in fasts when the world needed his energy to perform some task of justice and love was advised, as a mark of disdain for his action, to feed the dogs with his rejected food. It is greater to attend to giv-

ing hospitality to strangers than to stand and commune with God, according to the Rabbis. When Hillel was asked by a pagan to define the essence of Judaism while he stood on one foot, he replied, in the spirit of Leviticus 19:18: "That which is hateful to you, don't do unto others. The rest is commentary."

Commenting on Jeremiah 16:11: "And Me they have forsaken, and My Torah they did not keep," the Rabbis saw the text as implying: "Would that they had forsaken Me but had at least kept My Torah!" (*Yalkut Shimoni* on Jeremiah, section 282).

God, as conceived in Judaism, personalizes within Himself all the life-enhancing energies of the universe, and He cannot be loved in isolation from His goals. To love Him truly is to make oneself into a co-worker with Him.

Quoting Hosea 2:21, 22, a Jew, commencing his prayers as he winds the strap of his phylactery around his finger each weekday morning, declares: "I shall betroth Thee unto Me forever; I shall betroth Thee unto Me in righteousness and in judgment, in loving-kindness and in compassion; I shall betroth Thee unto Me in faith; and you shall know the Lord." As originally used by the prophet, these words were a promise that God would make permanent His loving relationship to His people. In the liturgy these words appear in a new light. They become man's daily renewal of love for his Creator; they are his promise to reciprocate God's constancy and faithfulness. But the considerations on which this love is to be based are righteousness, justice, loving-kindness, and compassion. It is in the ethical action that God and man converge. The ethical expresses God, and it also expresses man when he has risen to the likeness of God.

Man's love for God has all the vicissitudes of estrangement

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and alienation which characterize all loving relationships. Estrangement is sometimes the result of the fickleness of the lovers, the instability of their characters. Sometimes it is simply the result of neglect, due to various preoccupations. It may also be the result of disillusionment with the beloved or even with one's self. Jewish thought knows all these incidents of estrangement and seeks to help man back to a recovery of his love.

The betrayal of the love for God with another love is a common theme in the writings of the prophets. It takes the form of a substitution of some other god, one worshipped by some neighboring nation, for the living God, the only true God, the God of Israel. The prophets regarded such substitution as infidelity, and they attacked their people as guilty of "whoring" after other gods. The God of Israel has vanquished other gods in name, but one still meets the essence of this infidelity. People have raised various forces in their environment to a point of deification and given them a love that does not properly belong to them. The race, the nation, humanity, science, efficiency, pleasure—men have often served these with an absolute loyalty and loved them with an absolute love as constituting the source of life's ultimate meaning. In Nazi Germany there was a conscious attempt to revive the pagan Germanic gods, and Nazism, on the spiritual side, was a reversion to a pagan love. No wonder the Nazis abhorred Judaism as well as the plant which grew on its stem, Christianity. The God of Israel, in Judaism as well as in Christianity, is a jealous God, and one could not serve Him as well as the tribal gods of the primitive German folk. One cannot understand the Nazi character without realizing that what was externalized was only an extension of what had previously been internalized, that the cult of brutality was only an imi-

tation of the fierce, bestial deities whose passion and violence the German tribal myths had read into the heart of existence.

One can forfeit love through neglect. The pressure of the thousand and one pursuits that make up the round of daily activity often leave us little room to think of God. And once a love is out of our mind, it is soon out of our heart. To protect us against this, Judaism created various religious institutions. The daily reading of the *Shema*, for instance, prayer, various observances at home and in the synagogue, the Sabbath, and the festivals, these were ordained to invade our lives continually with the reminder of God's existence, His love for us, and the duty to reciprocate that love with our love for Him.

Disillusionment also played its part in the rupture of the relationship between God and man. There is man's disillusionment with God. The encounter of evil, unjust suffering, and death challenged one's faith in God's goodness. The Psalms are permeated with the cry of the soul which feels itself betrayed because evil so often holds sway and the innocent are trampled under foot. It is the mark of the spiritual maturity of these outpourings of the soul that they never end on a note of negation, but always the author finds his way to a re-affirmation of his faith in God, of his love for God. This theme is re-echoed in all those texts which make up the treasure of Jewish religious literature. It is not a sentimental faith to which Judaism invites us, but one toughened by the testing of suffering generations who knew how, despite their sufferings, to affirm the privilege of their destiny, to believe in God's ultimate righteousness, to love Him, to fear Him and to serve Him.

Not all proved strong of heart to withstand disillusioning experiences. In the first century of the Common Era there

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was a renowned Rabbi, Elisha ben Abuyah, whose name was at one time honored in the academies of Palestine, who could not reconcile a world dominated by Roman power with God's justice, mercy, and love, and he renounced his faith. In our own generation there have been many who have yielded similarly to the counsel of despair, surrendering their faith as inconsistent with the grim realism of the world we live in. But what is the end of such renunciation? What happens to man if we yield to the thought that there is only indifference at the heart of existence? Life becomes absurd, meaningless, a vanity of vanities; man is robbed of consolation in the present and hope for the future.

André Schwarz-Bart, in his brilliant novel of the Nazi holocaust *The Last of the Just*, explores this theme. His hero, Ernie Levy, attempted to shed his faith. He renounced his humanity in protest at what he saw of man and decided to make himself into a dog. With frightening literalism he began to fulfill his new role. But against the agony which he had known and the greater agony—the gas chamber and crematorium—which he knew awaited him—he finds it impossible to sustain his nihilism. In one of the most memorable passages of the novel, Schwarz-Bart describes his hero thus:

“Dirty dog,” he murmured suddenly.

And sitting down in the middle of the dark path, surrounded by shadows that seemed to be the shadows of his life itself, he hunched forward and strewed earth upon his hair, in the immemorial Jewish technique of humiliation.

That too left him dissatisfied.

Then, stretching out a hand in the darkness he slapped himself several times. But soon he felt that the slapper

was himself, and the one who was slapped another himself, and it was like beating someone else—in spite of his cheek, which still stung . . .

Then he tried to remember all the old fashioned methods of self-abasement. And he invoked the name of God. And he saw nothing there before which he could reasonably abase himself. And he evoked the image of his own people but doubtless they were too long dead for the image to be of much use.

Then he remained motionless and dry. And he stooped and picked up a stone, and in the pain he felt at cracking open his cheek, a tear finally escaped his eyes. Then two. Then three. And as he lay his cheek against the earth, sobbing, rediscovering within himself the source of tears that he thought had run dry, and while Ernie felt himself die, and come to life and die again, his heart sweetly opened to the light, as it had done long ago.⁵

Estrangement from God occurs often through disillusionment with one's self. Any deed done of which one is ashamed becomes a dark shadow that has fallen between lovers, and the one who feels guilty cannot face the one whom he has betrayed. This is a common phenomenon in the religious life. Sin, a betrayal of God, becomes an "iron curtain" that separates man from God. The melancholy which is the concomitant of a sense of guilt derives, at its ultimate source, from this sense of separation, from the feeling of severance from the source of life's meaning. It is also God's whispered prodding to return to Him.

⁵ André Schwarz-Bart: *The Last of the Just* (New York: Atheneum; 1960), pp. 301 f.

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Judaism points to a way of healing from this melancholy, from this distress; it is the way of penitence or return. God is a loving Father who stands ready to welcome His returning children, when they return to Him with fullness of heart. The greatest days in the Jewish calendar, Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, are dedicated to the theme of penitence, to summon men to return to God, to cleanse themselves of guilt, and to be renewed in the joy of God's love. It is life's greatest joy to be restored to the assurance that the one we love has forgiven our lapse and to feel open once again to return love for love.

A connecting thread joins the emotional side of religion with its rites and its ethical values. But the thread does not always run straight and unbroken. Action tends to harden into habit, while the emotion may dwindle and ebb away. We may then act out of habit, but without feeling or devotion. It is also possible to assume an action with an ulterior motive. Some have performed religious rites because they were aesthetically appealing or because it was the conventional thing to do. Some have been kind to a neighbor not because they were concerned with the neighbor's welfare, but because they wanted to earn his good will.

The Rabbis were very much troubled by this possibility of religious and ethical formalism, in which soulless, insincere gestures were offered under the pretense of honoring God or man. "The Holy One, praised be He," the Rabbis declared, "wants the heart" (Sanhedrin 106b). He is not content with the deed in itself. The feelings which accompany the deed are also important to Him. Rabbi Nahman bar Isaac in one instance declared that a transgressor who acts with sincere even if misguided conviction is superior to one who fulfills the law

but without the requisite motivation. Rabbi Nahman's view is of course an exaggeration. Some of the most monstrous crimes have been committed by people with deep feeling and sincere conviction. There is also a virtue in the performance of good deeds even if one is not motivated by the highest considerations. For the good deed, apart from its objective efficacy, has a certain pedagogic value. Every action has a transforming impact on the person performing it. A good action will gradually ennoble a person and help him rise from a lower to a higher motivation. The Rabbis modified Rabbi Nahman's view and they put both on an equal footing (Nazir 23b). The wrong deed done for sincere and honorable motives and the right deed done for insincere and ulterior motives are alike unsatisfactory. Both are fractional and incomplete. The ideal is to perform the right deed with sincerity and feeling, to keep alive the spring of emotion and let it flow into appropriate expression, into rites that adore God, and ethical actions that emulate the ways of His providence.

The love of God (and its corollary, the fear of God) is a human response to God, to the fact of His existence, to the knowledge of His providence. But a response is only one side of a dialogue, and before the response comes a call. The lover who responds to his beloved has first been stirred to respond. The response wells forth from his being, but he has first been called; his response is an answer to a summons.

Our response to God has a similar presupposition. God in His perfection, His wisdom, and His goodness excites man to respond, and man responds in love and awe and all those derivative actions to which man is directed by that love and awe.

It is in this sense that we say that God is the inspiration of

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our love for Him, of our worship of Him, as well as of our effort to evolve an ethical system in which we shall emulate the moral qualities that characterize His government of the world.



VIII



The Messianic Hope

THE BELIEF in the coming of the messiah is a characteristic doctrine of Judaism. It is found in the Bible, in the Talmud, in medieval as well as modern interpretations of Judaism. It is one of the principles to which Maimonides reduced the creed of Judaism. As summarized in the liturgy, the twelfth principle of the Jewish creed according to Maimonides states: "I believe with a firm faith in the coming of the messiah and though he tarry each day I await his coming."

The faith in the coming of the messiah became the song of the martyrs in the Hitler-made ghettos. It voiced the defiant faith of the Jewish people that the tyrant's scheme to exterminate the Jews would in the end be frustrated, that Jewish history would be climaxed not by disappearance but by redemption. For this is what the faith in the coming of the messiah always meant. The messiah was the hoped-for redeemer who would lead the children of Israel out of their darkness into freedom. There was a universal dimension to

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this faith also, for the messiah was also conceived in Judaism as inaugurating the redemption of all mankind.

What does this faith rest on? Is it more than a product of wishful thinking, contrived by people under stress to offer themselves consolation and hope? Does this faith remain a vital part of the religion to which a modern Jew shall subscribe?

The belief in the coming of the messiah epitomizes the Jewish conception of history. As we see events in the empirical world, it is not always easy to discern underlying trends. On the face of it, history appears to record the follies of *Homo sapiens*, blundering about on the world scene during the brief span of time allotted him. Then he withdraws, and, at least as some see it, the same tragic comedy begins all over again. The notion that history repeats itself is essentially a reflection of this outlook. That some features in the flux of events repeat themselves is certainly true, but if there were nothing new under the sun, we would indeed have arrived at a most melancholy conclusion concerning man's fate. The world would indeed be a vanity of vanities.

Judaism has always believed that history is intensely meaningful. There are follies and blunders which meet the naked eye, but these do not contradict an underlying goal any more than do the follies and blunders of a child during his early years of maturing. A child slips and falls, but his fate is not to slip and fall. Through these slips and falls he learns to stand erect and to walk as a man.

The span of a child's maturing is brief enough so that the law of his development is within confirmation by common experience. The span of human development is longer. It stretches back to the dim days of prehistory, and its ultimate consummation is far off on the horizon at a point of time

beyond our knowing. In the interval between is the time of learning and growing.

The follies and the blunders of the human race are the slips and the falls through which it is learning to stand more firmly, to walk more firmly, as human beings should. Commenting on the Biblical verse (Genesis 8:21), "For the nature of man is evil from his youth," one commentator, Rabbi Isaac Arama, suggests that man's nature reveals itself as evil because man is still young. He needs more time to mature. Then he will reveal his nobler qualities still dormant in his nature.

The need to grow through slow stages toward maturity is a painful process. It begins in the child when he leaves the protective shelter of his mother's womb, and then her arms, and then the home. These, at each turn, prepare him for the growing challenges to be encountered as he moves forward toward greater autonomy.

The human race faces a parallel necessity, and this is expressed poetically in the Garden of Eden story. At birth man lives in the shelter of God's immediate presence, in an ideal state. But this is not meant to be his destiny. He must leave Eden to face the struggles of life, struggles against the primitive in himself and in his environment. In the Bible man leaves Eden as a punishment for his disobedience. But that disobedience is only a symptom of all human disobedience in the state of the primitive. And his punishment, like all God's punishments, is in truth to be the means of his healing. It is to send him forth to the school of experience where he is to train himself toward maturity as a human person.

The earliest reference to the climactic development of history involves no personal messiah. It involves the vision of a new age, a new epoch, in which man will have transcended the present evils, in which history will have changed from

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the conflicts and group hostilities that now ravage mankind to a condition of universal harmony and peace, among individuals and nations.

It is glowingly described in the vision portrayed by both prophets, Isaiah and Micah (Isaiah, chapter 2, and Micah, chapter 4):

And it shall come to pass in the end of days,
That the mountain of the Lord's house
Shall be established as the top of the mountains
And shall be exalted above the hills;
And all nations shall flow unto it.
And many peoples shall go and say:
Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord,
To the house of the God of Jacob;
And he will teach us of His ways,
And we will walk in His paths.
For out of Zion shall go forth the Law
And the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.
And He shall judge between the nations, and shall decide for
many peoples;
And they shall beat their swords into plowshares
And their spears into pruning hooks;
Nation shall not lift up sword against nation,
Neither shall they learn war any more.

The consummation as here envisaged is not automatic. It involves exposure to a doctrine, to a way of life. Jewish teachers saw that the path to man's perfection was to be attained through the slow impact of the divine word embodied in the writings of the prophets, for which the Jewish people carried a prime responsibility as protagonist and witness. This

is reflected in the vision portrayed by the two prophets, which link the transformation of nations into a harmonious fellowship of peoples with the turning to "the mountain of the Lord's house" in Zion, with the acknowledgment of the sovereignty of the God of Jacob.

The vision of Isaiah and Micah presupposes that the Jewish people is settled in its own land but caught in the web of the melancholy conflicts between nations. Against this setting the emphasis of the prophetic vision is turned outward, toward the world. As the setting changes and the Jewish people suffers the loss of autonomy and becomes dispersed and exiled from its own land, the vision is drawn in terms of a more particular dimension, the hope of restoration; there is a shift of emphasis, though the universal dimension of the vision is never surrendered. This is a recurrent theme among post-exilic prophets, and it receives continued elaboration by teachers down through the centuries who dream the twofold dream, the dream of their people's redemption as concomitant with the larger redemption, which is to fulfill the goal of history as God's truth finally wins the heart of all men.

The prophet Zechariah offers a good illustration of this twofold dimension of the Jewish hope for the future (8:7-8, 23):

Thus saith the Lord of hosts: Behold I will save My people from the east country and from the west country; and I will bring them, and they shall dwell in the midst of Jerusalem; and they shall be My people, and I will be their God, in truth and in righteousness. . . . Thus saith the Lord of hosts: In those days it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold, out of all the languages of the nations, shall even take hold of the skirt of him

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that is a Jew, saying: We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.

Is this development to proceed spontaneously? Do any historic developments proceed spontaneously? It is true that certain historic forces proceed by a kind of logic of their own, and they exert an impact on people who become sensitized to certain needs and become stirred to new dreams and new possibilities. These in turn engender struggles out of which historic changes are usually forged. But at critical junctures these events are directed by human agents. Conditions do not of themselves explode into needs and dreams. These are meanings which a leader reads into his world. A leader must show the way. It was natural that the belief in historic redemption eventually assume personalization and be extended to a corollary doctrine, that a great leader will arise to lead the world to this consummation. This is the setting for the belief in the personal messiah.

The word *messiah* is Hebrew in origin, and it means literally "one who is anointed." This refers to the ancient practice of anointing a leader, especially a king, with oil, as a token of elevation to his new status. English royalty are still crowned through the ceremony of anointment, a relic of the ancient Hebrew institution. The British tradition took much of its character from the precedents in Scripture.

The Bible shows clearly that the term *messiah* was a general reference to a leader duly invested with the prerogatives of his office. Kings Saul, David, and Zedekiah are called in the Bible *mashiah*, from which derives *messiah*, the "anointed one"; even a pagan king, Cyrus the Persian, is addressed by this designation (I Samuel 24:7, II Samuel 22:51, Lamentations 4:20, Isaiah 45:1). Our liturgy continues to use the term

mashiah in this nontechnical sense. In quoting from the Psalms the *Kedushah* refers to their author (King David) as the *mashiah tzidkekha*, or "Thy righteous anointed one." Since David was the ideal king, it was natural too that the "anointed one" of the future be conceived as an offspring of the House of David. As Jeremiah expressed it (23:5-6): "Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous branch and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and he shall execute judgment and justice in the land. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely; and this is his name whereby he shall be called, the Lord is our righteousness."

Isaiah, the prophet of great visions, also links the messianic dream with the Davidic dynasty. Thus he prophesies (11:1-2): "And there shall come forth a shoot out of the stock of Jesse [David's father was Jesse], and a twig shall grow out of his roots, and the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of the knowledge and of the fear of the Lord." There follows another portrayal of the golden age of world peace in the future, climaxed by these words (11:9): "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."

As the highest mark of leadership was royalty, the house of David carried the legitimization of an honorable and glorious past, and by envisioning the anointed one of the future as a scion of the house of David, Jewish teachers simply built the elements of the dream with the material suggested by the reality of the present. In the period of exile, the process of idealization and legitimization lent even greater emphasis to

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the association of the Davidic dynasty with the greater leader of the future.

The functions of the "anointed one" in the prophetic writings are clear. He would effect the transition of the world to the new epoch, in which the Jewish people as the faithful custodian of the truths serving as the seeds of redemption would be established in glory and the rest of the world reveal the triumph of that redemption through the establishment of a harmonious and peaceful world order. As the imagination allowed itself to play on the details of the process transitional to redemption, or of the events marking the redemption, there was a corresponding elaboration in the role assigned to the messiah. But stripped of these imaginative projections the messiah stands as the great human figure to arise by the grace of divine providence to lead the way toward the hoped-for development which is to be the climax of history.

The prophet Isaiah personalized the entire Jewish people into the messianic role. This great seer lived during the period of exile, and he stirred his discouraged brethren with glowing visions of the return. But in his vision the return was to be the beginning of the redemption's true flowering. The Jewish people would then enter upon its vocation to fulfill the promise with which Abraham began his adventure of faith, that through him and his seed all the families of the earth would find a blessing. For it would surely be too trivial a thing for God to be concerned with the Jewish people as an end in itself; it was the prophet's conviction that through them His larger design in history would be served. "Yea, He saith," the prophet declared in the name of God (49:6), "It is too light a thing that thou shouldst be My servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the offspring of Israel;

I will also give thee for a light to the nations, that My salvation may be unto the end of the earth."

The sufferings of the Jewish people in exile the prophet interpreted as but the privations of the great leader who meets the resistance of an obdurate humanity; they were the sufferings which mark the faithful servant of the Lord, who bears them as incidental to his mission.

One can follow endlessly the proliferations of this faith and the varying forms to which generations of imaginative minds turned it. It is important, however, to bear in mind the core of the idea and to separate it from the imaginative incarnations in which we meet it in the course of the centuries. "The order and the detail of these events do not form an essential part of our creed," declared Maimonides. "We must not take too much notice of *aggadot* and *midrashim* [speculations of individual teachers in the Talmud] speaking on these and similar themes. We must not attribute great importance to them, for they do not lead to the fear and love of God. We must also abstain from calculating the time of the coming of the messiah." "Of these and similar things," Maimonides declared, "no man knows how they will come to pass."

What is the vital content of the messianic faith, of which all else is only imaginative embroidery? Maimonides offers us a succinct summation: "There will not be in those days any famine, war, jealousy or quarrel, because the good things will be in plenty, and even luxuries will be found everywhere; all will busy themselves with trying to know the Lord" (*Mishneh Torah, Hilkhoh Melakhim* 12:2-5).

The state of the world transfigured and redeemed, as here envisaged, is sometimes described as the kingdom of God triumphant. It is for this that we pray, in the words of the *Kaddish*, which concludes every major service in Judaism,

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as we say: "Glorified and hallowed be the great name of God throughout the world which He created according to His will. May His kingdom be established speedily in our time, unto us and unto the entire household of Israel." This is one of the most sublime expressions of the Jewish liturgy. No wonder it was eventually adopted as a prayer to be recited by mourners in tribute to their departed loved ones.

God is of course sovereign whether men acknowledge Him or not, but since man is a creature of free will who only slowly grows to the truth, he may fall prey to various illusions and become an idolator, offering his supreme loyalty to things which are not God. But he pays a price for this—he brings suffering on himself and his world. The bliss which God assigned to man waits for the day when he will discover the truth and live by it—that only God is King. The belief in the coming of the messiah assures us that this day will come, when God will be acknowledged as King over all the earth.

It is appropriate to ask whether there is any empirical evidence to validate this faith. A mist hovers over the time still unborn, and no man can know with any certainty. But on the basis of the time man has spent on earth it is possible to discern a direction. The direction becomes more clearly perceptible if we include the total antecedence of man, including the prehuman, out of which he has come.

It is the testimony of scientists who have contemplated man's past that such a direction is indeed discernible and that it represents a curve, turning unmistakably upward. This theme is eloquently explored in the recent work by Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, noted paleontologist, under the title, *The Phenomenon of Man*.¹ Sir Julian Huxley in a brilliant introduc-

¹ Pierre Teilhard de Chardin: *The Phenomenon of Man* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1959).

tion to this work hails it as having "clarified and unified our vision of reality." Teilhard de Chardin traces life to its beginnings at the frontiers of the infinitesimal, and he carries it beyond the point when it crossed the threshold of reflective thought to usher in what he calls the stage of "hominisation." A single sustaining pulse, he finds, pushes this miraculous process ever onward; it is the process of evolution becoming at last, in man, conscious of itself. And where does it point? It points, according to Teilhard de Chardin, ever higher.

Here is one of the statements in summation of his views: "There is nothing new under the sun' say the despairing. But what about you, O thinking man? Unless you repudiate reflection you must admit that you have climbed a step higher than the animals. 'Very well, but at least nothing has changed and nothing is changing any longer since the beginning of history.' In that case, O man of the twentieth century, how does it happen that you are waking up to horizons and are susceptible to fears that your forefathers never knew? . . . Either nature is closed to our demands for futurity, in which case thought, the fruit of millions of years of effort, is stifled, still-born in a self-abortive and absurd universe. Or else an opening exists—that of the supersoul above our soul; but in that case, the way out, if we are to agree to embark on it, must open out freely onto the limitless psychic spaces in a universe to which we can unhesitatingly entrust ourselves. . . . To imagine, discover, and reach this superior form of existence, we have only to think and to walk in the direction in which the lines passed by evolution take on their maximum coherence." ²

A brief essay by the well-known biologist, Kirtley Mather, makes the same claim. "If the trend of the recent past is

² Ibid., pp. 227 and 231-3.

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imaginatively extended into the future," declares Dr. Mather,³ "a picture appears to the mind's eye of the goal toward which the evolution of man is directed. . . . On such a basis, the purpose of the administration of the universe would seem to be the creation, through the process of evolution, of an exquisitely functioning organization of creatures possessing such physical, mental and spiritual attributes, that each individual, of his free will and accord, cooperates intelligently and wholeheartedly with all others of the species in using the available resources for the continuing welfare of all. . . . This, of course, is quite in line with Christian doctrine. If God is spirit and if man is a being created in the image of God, then the goal for man must be the continuing evolution of the human spirit."

Dr. Mather defines this doctrine as Christian because he encountered it through his Christian heritage. It is, of course, part of what Christianity learned in the household of faith in which it originated, Judaism. It is a Jewish doctrine which Judaism contributed to Christianity and through Christianity to the world.

There are ethical implications in this doctrine, and they are drawn by another scientist in his effort to discern the direction of human evolution. Writing on "A Modern Concept of God," the Nobel Prize winner in physics, Arthur Compton, makes these observations: "It is possible to see the whole great drama of evolution as leading toward the goal of the making of persons, with free, intelligent wills, capable of learning nature's laws, of seeing dimly God's purpose in nature, and of working with Him to make His purpose effective. What nobler ambition can man have than to cooperate with

³ Kirtley Mather: "Creation and Evolution," in *Science Ponders Religion*, p. 45.

his Maker in bringing about a better world in which to live?"⁴

The patient labors of scientists have helped fill with detail the sense of the wonder of life, of the consummate order of the universe, and of the commitment to higher forms of life which has guided unerringly the process of evolution. They have confirmed what Biblical seers have known intuitively. For in truth the wonders of existence are written everywhere and those sensitive have proclaimed from time immemorial: "How great are Thy works, O Lord, Thy thoughts are very deep!" It was to complete the curve of meaning that they were led to assume continued progress toward a golden age in the end of days. Coming from different perspectives, scientists and prophets converge in the act of faith, to give intelligibility to our past and hope for our future. Teilhard de Chardin confesses that his vision is in essence a venture of faith. "On neither side," he admits, "is there any tangible evidence to produce. Only in support of hope, there are rational invitations to an act of faith."⁵ It was substantially the same inspiration which led Isaiah to declare (45:18): "For He created it [the world] not to be a waste, but to be inhabited."

When will the messiah come? When will the hoped-for redemption dawn for the world? We have noted that Maimonides called for abstaining from the act of calculating the time of the coming of the messiah. The subject of calculating "the time of the messiah" occupied endless numbers of people through the centuries. Proceeding usually by the computation of letters and their numerical equivalents (all Hebrew letters

⁴ Arthur H. Compton: "A Modern Concept of God," in *Man's Destiny in Eternity*, pp. 19f.

⁵ Teilhard de Chardin: *op. cit.*, p. 232.

have numerical equivalents) in prophetic texts, these efforts have been fed by a desperate eagerness to know the unknown and especially to glimpse the time that would mark the end of suffering, the end of all the cruelties and evils that embitter life.

These calculations have often proved tragic, for they pinned the hopes of people now on one date and now on another, and when the hopes were frustrated the result was only more disillusionment.

These calculations are rooted in a misconception of the prophetic hope. The time of consummation is not preordained, and history is not an automatic movement of time toward the preordained moment of realization. If this were so, then man's action would be devoid of efficacy. God would be the only actor in history, and man only a puppet.

The redemption does not depend wholly on man, because history has an internal logic and goal, and He who is the source of it will not allow its permanent frustration. God therefore injects Himself into history to steer creation toward goals set by Him. We encounter such divine initiative in processes of judgment against the individual and society, in internal as well as external disturbances that erupt in the world, and in the appearance of inspired seers who call men to abandon evil and choose the good.

But man's action remains efficacious, and he can advance or retard the movement with which his own destiny is linked.

We may compare the world's maturing to the maturing of the individual. In the texture of individual human nature is written a time for each stage in a person's life, including the time when he is to become fully mature. But the individual, in the myriad factors expressive of his own unique self and in interaction with diverse and often unpredictable factors in his

environment, will determine the precise point of maturation. The maturing of man collectively embraces a longer span of time—it is the long span of historical time—but the precise point of maturation is unknown and unpredictable.

The Rabbis expressed it thus: The Messianic redemption will come “in its time,” regardless of what men do, but if men prove worthy, the Lord “will hasten it” (Sanhedrin 98a).

The belief in the messiah took on strange forms in the course of its history, and the strangest of these is found in Christianity. The belief in the messiah, we noted, was in its essence a conviction that the historical epoch was moving toward a climax, to fulfill the goal of human existence. But there was a divergence in defining the nature of this climax, in defining the goal of man’s existence.

In its original prophetic formulation this climax is set in this world, in historical time. The new era would mark the triumphant vindication of the ideals of the divine kingdom and their realization in the existential world. It is this conception which was further developed by the Rabbis. The change projected was, of course, to be internalized before it was externalized. It was to be enthroned in the human heart and then win its way into the fabric of human relations and human institutions.

This vision is well expressed in the *Alaynu* prayer: “We therefore hope in Thee, O Lord our God, that we shall soon behold the triumph of Thy might, when idolatry will be uprooted from the earth and falsehood be utterly destroyed. We hope for the day when the world will be perfected under the dominion of the Almighty and all mankind learn to revere Thy name; when all the wicked of the earth will be drawn in penitence unto Thee. O may all the inhabitants of the

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earth recognize that unto Thee every knee must bend, every tongue pledge loyalty. Before Thee, O Lord our God, may they bow in worship, and give honor to Thy glorious name. May they all acknowledge Thy Kingdom, and may Thy dominion be established over them speedily and forever more. For sovereignty is Thine and to all eternity Thou wilt reign in glory. As it is written in Thy Torah: 'The Lord will reign forever and ever.' And it is further written: 'The Lord will be acknowledged as King over all the earth; on that day will be the Lord be one and His name one.' "

The messianic theme, as conceived in Judaism, finds its characteristic expression in this prayer, which concludes every service in Judaism, whether private or public. The messianic hope is not personalized. Its emphasis falls on the substantive content of the hope, not on the human mediator who is to help in its victory. And the hope involves the dawn of a new epoch, leading to the universal acknowledgment of God's sovereignty, to the banishment of idolatry and falsehood from the human heart, and, correspondingly, to the perfection of the world in the image of the ideals of the divine kingdom. But there is no sharp break with the realities of historical existence.

This is consistent with the general attitude of Judaism toward the world. It regards the world as good. It regards man as capable of continued perfection. The historical order is still perverted by the sway of evil, born of the pursuit of falsehood and idolatry, but it is capable of redemption, and it is on the way to redemption.

There was another trend in Judaism which did not share this optimistic view of man. The vision of the Judaic world destroyed under Rome and the seemingly relentless march of brute power from triumph to triumph led many Jews to "a

failure of nerve." They doubted the redemption of historical existence. There developed among these men a mood of despair about the world. It was reinforced by Gnostic teachings, then popular in the ancient world, which regarded physical existence as intrinsically evil and maintained that salvation consisted in escape from existence.

The messianic hope was given a different formulation in these circles. It was believed that God would intervene to destroy this world and liberate man from his historical involvements. He would henceforth live as a spirit, free of the conflicts and dilemmas of the physical order, enjoying the bliss of God's presence. Those deemed unworthy to share in this bliss would of course be excluded; they would perish under God's judgment and wrath. The "Witnesses of Jehovah" have preached a comparable doctrine in our time; they have announced the imminent end of the world and called on men to prepare for the Day of Judgment, which would bring the saved bliss in heaven and doom the others to perdition.

Out of this trend there eventually developed the version of the belief in the messiah as we find it in Christianity. The messiah is the one who inaugurates the new order, who reveals to the world that earthly existence is coming to an end, and he asks the world to prepare for it. The messiah himself grows in his otherworldly qualities. He is eventually conceived as the "son of God," sent by God that men, in the present plane of existence, might believe in him and be saved. The messiah, then, offers men a way of escaping from the world rather than a hope for its perfection.

This belief was concretized in the person of Jesus, whom Christians took as the embodiment of their hope. And the principal burden of Christian teaching has been the belief that

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the messiah already came and performed his work in the world and that by identifying themselves with Jesus and accepting the efficacy of his offering, men would find salvation.

For Judaism the notion that the messiah has already come reduces the belief in the messiah to absurdity. In Judaism the belief in the coming of the messiah must be equated with its substantive content. The criteria of the postmessianic age are the universal knowledge of God, a world of universal justice and peace. Considering the agonies endured by men in the centuries since Jesus, considering the state of our own world, it becomes a mockery to believe that the world is in the period subsequent to its climactic development. If the world's goal has not yet been reached then there is still hope for man. But if this be the postmessianic world then creation is a vanity, and man's life on earth a cruel jest.

Maimonides defined the role of Jesus as that of a "fore-runner of the messiah," because through him many people who would otherwise have remained in ignorance have come to know the teachings of the prophets (*Mishneh Torah* [in uncensored edition], *Hilkhot Melakhim* 11:3-4). The ethical passion of his life, and his inseparable association with the faith of Judaism in which he was nurtured, made Christianity, which was built around the life and teachings of Jesus, into a vital force for moralizing and spiritualizing the world. This is part of the leaven which works to effect the transformation that will some day usher in the messianic age.

Maimonides included Mohammed in the same designation, and we would be justified in including anyone else whose life and work serves to advance the moral and spiritual progress of humanity. Liberal Christianity tends to redefine the role of Jesus in such terms, to see him as a great teacher, but

not a deity, not a god or "the son of God." It tends, too, to re-emphasize the historical goals of the messianic hope, the goals of perfecting the world rather than its transcendence. The claim that salvation depends on the belief that Jesus himself is the messiah, is, from the point of view of Judaism, idolatrous and a digression from the larger goals to which the messianic hope summons us.

There have been some Jewish teachers in modern times who have suggested the repudiation of the personalized form of the messianic hope. The Reform and Reconstructionist movements have substituted in the Prayer Books published by them *u-mayvi ge'ulah* for *u-mayvi go'ayl* in the opening benediction of the *Amidah*. The original affirms the hope that God will "send a redeemer," while the substitute changes it, affirming instead that He will "send redemption." But most Jewish teachers have retained the original form, not only because it is authentic and traditional, but also because it reflects the awareness that historical movements are mediated through human leaders.

The modern Jewish poets H. Leivik and Avigdor Hameiri, the former writing in Yiddish and the latter in Hebrew, have continued to express the messianic hope in a personalized form; personalization is closer to the idiom of poetry. But while we may continue to speak of the hope in the coming of the messiah in a personalized form, the personal is clearly secondary. Primacy belongs to the substantive content of this hope.

A stirring expression of this hope in Judaism is offered us in the fourteenth-century hymn *Ve-Ye'etayu*, which is part of the liturgy for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.

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All the world shall come to serve Thee
And praise Thy glorious name,
And Thy righteousness triumphant
The islands shall acclaim.
And nations give Thee homage
Who knew Thee not before,
And the ends of earth shall praise Thee,
Thy name they shall adore.

They shall build for Thee their altars,
Their idols overthrown,
And their hands shall clasp in friendship
As they turn to Thee alone.
They shall bow before Thy grandeur,
And know Thy kingdom's might,
They shall walk in understanding,
Who are astray in night.

They shall extol Thy greatness,
And of Thy power speak,
And acclaim Thee, shrined, uplifted
Beyond man's highest peak.
And with reverential homage,
Of love and wonder born,
With the ruler's crown of beauty
Thy head they shall adorn.

With the coming of Thy kingdom
The hills shall break into song,
And the islands laugh exultant
That they to God belong.

J U D A I S M

And all their congregations
So loud Thy praise shall sing,
That faraway peoples, hearing,
Shall come and hail Thee King.



IX



The Domain of Heaven and the Domain of Hell

ONE OF the beliefs deeply imbedded in Judaism is that God rewards those who obey Him and punishes those who disobey Him. This belief had a far-reaching development in the history of Judaism. An expression of it is found in the concepts of heaven and hell, or in their Hebrew equivalents, *Gan Eden* and *Gehinnom*. When physical existence terminates, according to this belief, a final accounting takes place. Man faces his Maker, and he is judged for what he has made of his life. A good man is rewarded by being assigned to the abode of the righteous, a realm of bliss, while an evil man is doomed to suffer in a realm of punishment which is reserved for the wicked.

There are many who take the conception of heaven and hell literally, as referring to places which have a physical

existence, and they understand the rewards of the righteous and the punishments of the wicked also literally, as referring to pleasures and pains which we can know with the senses, as we know pleasure and pain during our life on earth. Dante's *Divine Comedy* has introduced into Western culture graphic descriptions of a physical heaven and a physical hell. His poem revels especially in the gory details of the sufferings visited on the miserable sinners in the various chambers of horror into which the kingdom of hell is divided.

A survey of classic Jewish writers on the subject reveals two interpretations of the doctrine of heaven and hell. The exponents of conventional Jewish piety who remained untouched by philosophic thought tended to interpret this doctrine literally. The rewards of heaven and the punishments of hell were understood by them in physical terms. How could there be a physical form of retribution after death? Does not the body deteriorate? Does not death mark the end of consciousness? To rationalize a physical retribution after death these teachers taught the corollary doctrine of bodily resurrection. Repeating the miracle of creation, it was taught, God will recreate the body, reunite it with its soul, so that the person in his individual identity may stand before his Maker in final judgment. And the judgment, whether of reward or punishment, will be pronounced upon a reintegrated person, body and soul reunited.

The belief in a physical heaven and a physical hell, and in rewards as well as punishments conceived in physical terms, has seemed repugnant to many people, in modern no less than in ancient times. The discovery of an order of being other than the material even in this world robbed the promise as well as the threat of physical rewards and punishments in a hereafter of much of their cogency. The teachers of the Bible

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as well as the Talmud had discerned that life's greatest satisfaction was in the hours spent in study, in the performance of deeds of loving-kindness to a fellow man, in loving and serving God. And what was the greatest deprivation if not the deprivation of these things wherein a person transcends the physical and lives in the pursuit of the spiritual? One of the teachers of the Talmud clearly reflects this when he states (Berakhot 17a): "In the world to come there is no eating nor drinking, no begetting of children, no commerce, no envy, no hatred, no competition—there is only this, that the righteous sit with crowns on their heads and they take delight in the splendor of God's presence."

There is another consideration which poses an even more fundamental challenge. Modern astronomy has shown that the heavens represent what we can glimpse of cosmic space in which revolve an unending number of worlds, stars, and planets, among whom our earth is one of the tiniest members. We have been probing also to the lowest strata of the earth, exploring the depths of the floor of the ocean. In the world as thus revealed to us, we cannot entertain physical sites reserved for the righteous and the wicked as the scene for the final retribution to be visited on them.

The hesitation to believe in a literal conception of heaven and hell derives also from the belief in God's mercy. Who is this righteous man who is to enjoy the unending bliss of heaven? And who is this evil-doer upon whom the fires of hell are to be loosed to inflict their unending tortures? There are some exceptional cases. There are rare saints who clearly tower above their fellow men. There are also some gross villains who have knowingly chosen evil and have immersed themselves in it with glee and abandon. Adolf Eichmann engineered the murder of millions, and when brought to

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justice in an Israeli courtroom, even when all the evidence of his crimes was shown to his face and the voice of those who spoke on behalf of his victims sounded in his ears, he remained stolidly calm, indicating that he was still wedded to the philosophy of genocide. But most men are not so clearly polarized.

A wide divergence exists in the patterns of human behavior and in the moral choices made by men. But we have come to realize that the human deed is often conditioned by a variety of factors beyond man's control. Some are driven to wrongdoing by mental illness, by environmental pressures, by a defective heredity or a delinquent home. We have come to realize, too, that those we acclaim as the exemplars of the good life are not free of many glaring faults, and those we condemn as wrongdoers are not without their share of good deeds. Only a slight margin often differentiates the moral quality of human behavior. This slight margin is important, but is it enough to justify the fatal differences in the destinies of men, to consign some to the bliss of heaven and others to the tortures of hell?

We have considered the nature of man, upon whom the weight of retribution is to fall. What of God, from whose providential order the process of retribution flows?

Judaism has sometimes stressed the attribute of justice in God, but the Rabbis were keenly aware that a rigorous application of the strict demands of justice would nullify the possibility of all human existence. For man is finite, a creature frail in wisdom, torn by all kinds of passions in his own soul, subject to all kinds of pressures in his environment. He strives for the heights, but judged by the standard of the Eternal he is lowly and of little merit. Rabbi Levi put this into the mouth of Abraham, when he pleaded with God to spare the

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wicked city of Sodom: "If Thou desirest a world, then Thou canst not demand absolute justice, and if Thou demandest absolute justice, then Thou canst not have a world. Why dost Thou pull the rope at both extremes? Thou desirest a world and Thou demandest absolute justice! Choose one. If Thou wilt not compromise a little, the world will not be able to endure." Rabbi Levi adds that Abraham was chosen to become God's emissary to the world because he revealed this sensitivity that the world cannot exist if God did not deal mercifully with His creatures (Bereshit Rabbah 39:5).

The Rabbis held on to the concept of God's justice, but they saw His justice as in truth another expression of His mercy. A disregard of man's transgressions would leave him undisturbed to continue on the path he has chosen. God's justice is for the sake of redeeming man from the evil of his ways; it is not to harm him as an end in itself. The dominant attribute of God, for the Rabbis, is expressed in His designation of Father. The necessities of His plans sometimes prompt Him to deal harshly with His children, but they remain His children and He continues to love them despite their faults. Their suffering, even if brought on by their own wrongdoing, is to Him a source of vexation and grief. God is pictured by the Rabbis as grieving for the death of evil-doers. He is pictured as having observed a seven-day period of mourning for the loss of the generation that perished in the flood in Noah's time (Bereshit Rabbah 27:4). It is difficult to think of a merciful God subjecting *any* of His children to the kind of sufferings which are pictured in the conventional versions of hell.

The Rabbis resolved the problem partly by shrinking the proportions of hell and shearing it of much of its associated terror. They ruled out eternal damnation. They conceived of hell as a transitional period of expiation generally estimated to

last a maximum of twelve months. This was further reduced by granting the inhabitants of hell a reprieve one day each week, the Sabbath. The merit of the children was considered as being further efficacious in reducing the time served in hell. The recitation of the Kaddish in memory of a parent was partly inspired by this concern of a child to devolve merit upon his departed father or mother. The time for the recitation of the Kaddish is, however, reduced to eleven months, for no one was to be thought of as due to serve the maximum of twelve months in hell. Rabbi Simeon ben Lakish, on the other hand, scoffed at the idea of hell altogether, for as he saw it even the greatest of sinners abounds in good deeds as a pomegranate does in seeds, and he does not deserve a fate such as is envisioned by the conventional concept of hell (Eduyot 2:10, *She'iltot*, *Beresbit* 1; *Siddur Tzelota De-Avraham*, comment on the Mourner's Kaddish; Hagigah 27a).

The belief in heaven and hell was also given a figurative interpretation. The literal as well as the figurative interpretations of this concept will become clearer to us as we study it in the perspective of history.

The belief in reward and punishment in an afterlife received its greatest emphasis in the post-Biblical period. Throughout the period of the first Temple, which reflects the world of the Bible, we find various references to God's retributive justice, but it is a justice which works itself out of this world. It works itself out, moreover, within the life of the people, rather than that of the individual.

During this period the individual did not yet assume the role of personal importance to press for a private fulfillment of divine justice. He saw himself as part of the people, and he was included in his people's destiny.

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Biblical writers speak continually of reward and punishment as the basic law by which history is governed, and they are tireless in reiterating its meaning for their people's destiny. Obedience to God's law, we are promised, will yield prosperity and peace, while disobedience will yield exile, famine, and death.

The dissolution of the compact community which followed in the epoch after the destruction of the Temple and the Babylonian exile led to a rise in individualism. People felt that God's justice must also be fulfilled in their private lives and not only in the life of the people. The realities of exile and suffering visited upon the Jewish people, while their adversaries moved from conquest to conquest, tended to becloud the principle of divine justice in the destiny of the people as well. These developments were further reinforced by the uncertain conditions which followed during the brief period of the Maccabees and then during the Roman occupation of Palestine, climaxed by the total destruction of Jewish autonomy at the hand of Rome.

Jewish teachers held on to the belief in divine retribution, but they asked that we posit a longer time span for its working. They pictured the ultimate fall of the predatory empire, and the future restoration of the Jewish people in the Holy Land. And they stressed a reward and punishment for the individual in an afterlife.

We have noted that the Hebrew term for the abode assigned to the righteous is *Gan Eden* or Garden of Eden. The name derives of course from the site where Adam and Eve lived blissfully before they sinned. It was an ancient belief, widespread among Jewish teachers in the Talmudic period, that things on earth have their prototypes in heaven. To some extent this parallels the Platonic conception that material

things are only copies of eternal ideas, which exist eternally in a purely spiritual state. Corresponding to a Garden of Eden on earth there was accordingly posited a parallel realm in the celestial order, a "heavenly" Garden of Eden. On the other hand the designation of the abode of the righteous by this name may be no more than a case of linguistic borrowing, as was suggested by Saadiah Gaon.¹ The earthly Garden of Eden was an ideal home for man in a state of innocence. It was natural, on the basis of analogy, to employ the same name for the celestial home reserved for the man who has met life's temptations and returns to his Maker in a comparable state of innocence.

The Hebrew term for hell, we also noted, was "Gehinnom." This name too derives from an earthly site mentioned in the Bible. According to Jeremiah (7:31) there was a valley (*ge*) which belonged to the son of Hinnom, in the south of Jerusalem, where Moloch worship was conducted. This pagan rite consisted of the offering of children to be sacrificially burnt by fire. For the prophet this was of course the ultimate abomination, and he predicted that this valley would in the end become known as the "valley of slaughter," where those guilty of the abominable practice would pay the penalty for their grievous sin. These associations made the name appropriate for the realm of punishment that waited for the wicked. As to the actual location of hell we have a variety of suggestions. Some place it in the nethermost part of the earth, another opinion places it "behind the dark mountains," and still another opinion places it "above the firmament."

The description of the rewards in "Gan Eden" and the

¹ Saadiah Gaon: *Beliefs and Opinions* (trans. S. Rosenblatt) (New Haven: Yale University Press; 1948), IX, 4.

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punishments in "Gehinnom" are often taken from the world of the physical. Sometimes these descriptions are not meant to be taken literally. On the other hand it was natural for Jewish teachers to seek an expression of divine justice which could be experienced by a person while still retaining his individual identity and consciousness. How could this be unless the person somehow retained a continuity of selfhood? This did not permit a total spiritualization of these concepts. As earthly creatures, moreover, the realities with which we are familiar are those associated with the physical. Out of the anxiety to portray God's reward and punishment in vivid terms the imagination was naturally led to draw these conceptions in physical terms.

The belief in *Gan Eden* and *Gehinnom* represents, in other words, an imaginative elaboration on God's retributive justice. In the words of M. Friedlander:² "As the life of Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden was free from care and trouble, and such a life was the ideal of human hopes and wishes, the Garden-Eden [literally, "the garden of pleasure"] became the symbol of man's happiness in its perfection, such as will fall to the good and the righteous. On the other hand, the valley of Hinnom, near Jerusalem, was a place of horror and disgust; a place where at one time children were burned to Moloch, and where later the refuse of the city was cast. Dwelling in the valley of Hinnom became the symbol of the punishment to be inflicted on the wicked. Ganeden or Paradise, and Gehinnom or Hell, are thus mere figures to express our idea of the existence of a future retribution, and must not be taken literally as names of certain places. The detailed

² M. Friedlander: *The Jewish Religion* (London: Shapiro, Vallentine and Co.; 1937), p. 223.

descriptions of Paradise and hell as given in books both profane and religious are nothing but the offspring of man's imagination."

The detailed description of heaven and hell in classic Jewish writings are important to us as reminders of the tenacity with which Judaism held on to the belief in God's justice and in man's responsibility for what he makes of his life. But these descriptions, as found in Jewish writings, are also of interest to us because they reflect the ethical sensitivities which predominate in Jewish tradition. The wicked were to be judged and sentenced, but these Jewish writings seek to safeguard the principles of equity in judgment. The sinner was to hear the specific sins of which he was charged. The righteousness which won for a person a place in "heaven" was defined in purely moral terms, and it included the noble people among all nations, regardless of their formal religious professions. Among the gross evils bringing a person to hell the Rabbis listed predominately moral offenses. There was also escape from hell after a period of expiation, which as we noted, was usually regarded as twelve months, except for the following three: the adulterer, the one who embarrasses his neighbor in public, and the one who calls his neighbor by a derisive nickname (*Bava Metzia* 58b). It is touching to find the Rabbis declare that a man who suffered in this world would be reprieved for any misdeeds he might have committed in the course of his life; they listed among the expiatory sufferings extreme poverty, an unhappy marriage, and severe illness (*Eruvin* 41b).

There was another version of the belief in the afterlife prevalent especially among the Jewish philosophers. Instead of

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bodily resurrection this version centers survival after death in the soul. Philo of Alexandria, who was the earliest of the Jewish philosophers, blazed the trail in this interpretation of survival. He never distinguished between the two versions of the afterlife, and he often employed the same vocabulary as did those who taught the doctrine of the resurrection, but as Dr. H. A. Wolfson has pointed out, this vocabulary was "understood by him as being only a figurative way of referring to immortality."³

Maimonides specifically rejected the survival of the body, assigning the afterlife to the soul alone. Maimonides dealt with this in his *Essay on the Resurrection of the Dead*.

Maimonides said: "Behold it has been explained that the entire necessity for the existence of the body is for one function, and that is the reception of food for the preservation of the body, and the propagation of its kind for the preservation of the species. When that function is removed because its necessity no longer exists . . . as our sages have informed us, 'In the world to come there is no eating, drinking or sexual intercourse' . . . that is clear evidence of the non-existence of the body. Because God brings nothing into existence to serve no purpose whatever. . . . And if the people of the world to come are not possessed of organs, but are just bodies . . . perhaps solid globes, or pillars or cubes . . . this is simply ludicrous."

Maimonides was aware that for many people the denial of a bodily level of survival would be a crushing disappointment. But he summoned them to another order of being, infinitely richer and more meaningful than they dare anticipate: "In the

³ H. A. Wolfson: *Philo* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press; 1947), Vol. I, p. 404.

world to come there is no bodily form. . . . Nor can any of the accidents to which bodies are subject in this world occur there. Perhaps that bliss will be lightly esteemed by you, and you will think that the reward for fulfilling the commandments and for being perfect in the ways of truth consists in nothing else than indulging in fine food and drink, enjoying beautiful women, wearing raiment of fine linen and embroidery, dwelling in apartments of ivory, and using vessels of silver and gold and similar luxuries, as those foolish and ignorant Arabs imagine who are steeped in sensuality. But wise and intelligent men know that all these things are nonsense and vanity and quite futile. . . . As for the great bliss which the soul is to enjoy in the world to come, there is no possibility of comprehending it or knowing it in this world; because in this world we are only cognizant of the welfare of the body and for that we long. But the bliss of the world to come is exceedingly great and cannot bear comparison with the happiness of this world except in a figurative manner. . . .” (*Mishneh Torah, Hilkhos Teshuvah* 8:2-6).

But the bliss of immortality known by the soul does not come to it automatically, according to Maimonides. It has to be earned. It is earned by a person if he actualizes his intellectual and moral potentialities. The soul with which we are born has the potentiality of becoming a “real” soul through the pursuit of moral and intellectual perfection. But this is a good which a person must choose actively. The failure to choose it forfeits this heavenly bliss and dooms the soul to oblivion and death. But the choice made begins to yield its consequences during the stage of our mortality. Maimonides quotes the well-known rabbinic aphorism, in which he sees an intimation of his own views: “The wicked are called dead

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during their lives but the good are called living even after death" (Berakhot 18a).

The immortality of the soul had been a familiar doctrine in Greek philosophy, but for the Greeks the soul's immortality was an essential attribute of its nature; its immortality was automatic. Every soul was an immortal substance, and it cannot forfeit its immortal quality, no matter what befalls it in life. In Judaism, however, the principle of divine retribution remained sovereign, and the state of the soul, it was maintained, was to be determined by the quality of life lived within the span of mortal existence.

Rabbi Judah Loew of Prague (1512-1609) was one of the Jewish teachers who wrote at length on this subject. The hereafter was for him a state of bodiless existence, and neither its rewards nor its punishments were physical. Its joys were constant union with God. Its misery was the misery of alienation from God, which corresponds to what is traditionally described as "hell." Alienation from God releases a destructive force, fittingly symbolized by fire, that becomes operative on a person. It is only when man lives with a sense of God's presence that one admits into one's life the creative and sustaining power which derives from God. The description of hell, with its fiery, lurid tortures, Rabbi Judah interpreted figuratively. Indeed, the hell to which the wicked doom themselves is, according to Rabbi Judah, operative even in this world. "There is no doubt," wrote Rabbi Judah, "that hell . . . extends its power to this world. . . . And these matters are not at all physical, but it is all a mental conception. The whole meaning of hell is deterioration and failure for any living being. . . . Hell is total non-existence" (*Derekh Ha-Hayyim*, on Avot 5:23). The noted contemporary theolo-

gian Karl Barth has expounded a similar view of hell, defining it not as a geographical area but as a "state of exclusion from God. . . . Godlessness is existence in hell."⁴

Stripped of their purely physical expressions "heaven" and "hell" remain helpful designations for the state of being to which a person is drawn by one kind of life or another. "Heaven is not a place," declared Morris Joseph in *Judaism as Creed and Life*,⁵ "for the liberated soul knows neither place nor time; it is a state of being. Its joys are not the sordid joys of the senses, for the senses perish with the body; they are the joys of the spirit. The bliss of being near to God . . . that is heaven." As for hell, we have often referred to certain kinds of life as "a hell on earth." To quote Morris Joseph once more: "If Hell is remorse, Heaven is the bliss of the conscious communion with the Highest."⁶ There are many evils done which turn life to a hell on earth, and there are many different types of conduct which enable us to commune with the Highest, which is our understanding of heaven.

Hell, we have noted, is a negative, destructive force, released by evil, which is operative in this world, apart from whatever consequences it may have for man's destiny in a hereafter. "Evil," declared Albert Schweitzer,⁷ "is what annihilates, hampers or hinders life." A. N. Whitehead calls it similarly "a destructive agent."⁸ There is abounding evidence that this is indeed the nature of evil, that it carries with it retributory consequences which are destructive of life, while

⁴ Quoted by Roland Murshat Frye: *God, Man and Satan* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press; 1960), p. 41.

⁵ London: Macmillan and Company Ltd.; 1903, p. 147.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Quoted by Frye: *God, Man and Satan*, p. 30.

⁸ A. N. Whitehead: *Religion in the Making* (New York: Meridian Books; 1960), p. 63.

life in all its richness thrives only where there is goodness.

In the life of society as in the life of the individual there is an apparent correlation between justice and peace. Injustice in any society breeds unrest and strife and ultimately releases the forces that destroy our world. Social harmony and world peace can be built only on foundations of justice.

The individual, too, invariably finds this correlation in his own life. A life of evil brings often enough disaster and suffering upon the one who lives it. The correlation is neither precise in scope nor immediate in time. Indeed were this the case virtue would cease to be virtue, for men would pursue the good because of pragmatic or selfish considerations. It is because the actualities of life permit the illusion that the world is indifferent to good and evil that virtue takes on a moral quality. Morality exists only to the extent that virtue is chosen for its own sake. Indeed the Rabbis cautioned against the virtue that is pragmatically motivated. "Be not like the servants who serve a master in order to receive a reward," we are taught in the *Ethics of The Fathers*, "but be like those who serve their master without expecting to receive a reward, and let the fear of Heaven be upon you."

The choice of virtue for its own sake is not a negation of the principle of reward and punishment; it only raises this principle to a higher level. And while on some levels the law of retribution works slowly, on other levels it works immediately. It is concomitant with the deed done. All good deeds are ultimately expressions of love, the love of self, the love of fellow creatures, the love of God. Thus Rabbi Akiba cited the golden rule as the one all-inclusive summation of the Torah (Sifra on Leviticus 19:8): "You shall love your neighbor as yourself; I am the Lord." Love enhances the capacity to love; it releases the powers hidden in a person and

raises him to his maximum human potential. The converse is also true. Hatred "freezes" the creative potentialities in the person and releases instead his destructive energies against himself and against others. The reward of virtue is thus the strengthening of the powers to live creatively, while the penalty for vice is the continued stultification of the individual, the shrinking of his powers to live a vital and creative life. The *Ethics of the Fathers* summarizes these considerations neatly by the pithy statement (4:2): "Ben Azzai said, Run to do even a minor commandment and flee from any kind of transgression. For one righteous deed inspires another righteous deed, and one transgression, another transgression. The reward for a righteous deed is another righteous deed, and the penalty for a transgression is another transgression."

The growing capacity to live as a creative and wholesome person, which is itself the reward of righteous living, brings the person to a state of inner peace. This peace is included in the prophetic promise (Isaiah 32:17): "And the work of righteousness shall be peace."

One of the basic requirements of man's nature is to live creatively, to love God's creatures, to practice kindness rather than hostility in all our relationships. An act of wickedness is therefore a violation of our nature, and it is soon followed by a troubled conscience. The noted psychiatrist Erich Fromm has reminded us of this in his recent book *Psychoanalysis and Religion*:⁹ "In his 'laboratory,' relying only on observation, reason and his own experience as a human being, he [the analyst] discovers that mental sickness cannot be understood apart from moral problems; that his patient is sick because he has neglected his soul's demands."

⁹ New Haven: Yale University Press, 1950, p. 7.

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The spiritual person would not wish to motivate his morality even by these considerations, that good deeds bring us inner peace, or to use a popular vulgarization, peace of mind, and evil deeds bring us inner distress, or mental anguish. For these too, when consciously sought, are pragmatic and calculating and selfish, rather than a disinterested quest for virtue.

The highest motivation in conduct asked by Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook is to pursue the goal of holiness. "The virtue of holiness demands essentially that a person shall direct all his aspirations and thoughts not toward the fulfillment of his personal wants but toward glorifying the Lord of all existence, toward doing the will of his Creator. And as long as a person thinks only of his perfection, even if it be spiritual perfection, he has not attained the virtue of holiness. For in the state of holiness one rises to what is good and just as ends in themselves, out of the recognition of the truth that has clarified itself to him. The quest for self-perfection, however, derives also from self-love."¹

But is not a service inspired by the quest for holiness also productive of rewards? These rewards are not consciously sought, but they are distilled subtly as a by-product of a life of holiness. This is indeed one of the most paradoxical qualities of life—its greatest rewards cannot be consciously sought but can be known only by those who pursue life's goals with total unconcern for the practical consequences which these goals will have for their own lives. But these goals are surely productive of practical consequences. A life consecrated to the service of God yields a person a joy and a peace that can best be described as heavenly, while a life of

¹ Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook: *Olat Rayah* (Jerusalem: Mosad Ha-Rav Kook; 1939), pp. 271-272.

alienation from God, devoid of deeds of mercy and love, as we noted previously, distorts life and makes of it a hell on earth.

It is in this spirit that a modern philosopher, Dr. Irwin Edman, has argued for the reinstatement of the term "hell" as the most suitable characterization of the malaise which afflicts many moderns. Having renounced God, modern man has lost a center of values; his life is a drifting amidst an uncertain sea, without direction and without hope. In the words of Professor Edman: "Hell as a geographical location may be abolished; but the modern pagan without a creed knows very well . . . that it is impossible here and now in this secular and transient life to live without hope of redemption. To be in Hell has, in the theological tradition, been to live without vision of God. How many for whom the old canons are abolished and who have no new ones to live by, know the horror—blank and paralyzing—of living without a vision of a Good which could give meaning to their lives?"

Professor Edman continues his analysis: "Surely many of our generation know what this means. By reading themselves out of the ancient convictions, they have demonstrated some of their essential truths, that he who is without a God, without a Good, is damned; that he who has no Heaven to look to is in Hell. The fool hath said in his heart, 'There is no God,' and he in so saying has found himself in the abyss."²

There are conditions attained in the present life, in other words, which may be designated by the terms "heaven" and "hell," in the spirit of the suggestion by Rabbi Judah Loew of Prague, whom we have quoted earlier. Heaven is the condi-

²Irwin Edman: "The Pagan's Hell," in William Ralph Inge (ed.): *What Is Hell?* (New York: Harper and Brothers; 1930), pp. 176, 179, 180, 181.

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tion in which life is affirmed through the affirmation of its claims to be related to God as the center of value, by the actual pursuit of these values. Hell is the condition in which the self becomes frustrated and its creative elements shut off from their legitimate expressions through the embrace of evil, which is a destructive force, paralyzing, inhibiting, disintegrating, directing itself toward negating existence and reversing its movement downward, toward nothingness.

What of the belief in retribution after death? The question needs to be answered on two levels. Does the self, in some aspect of it, survive death? And, assuming that we answer this question affirmatively, does the retributive force designated by the terms "heaven" and "hell" continue to be relevant to the condition which pertains after death has taken over and proceeds to devour the body and its senses?

We cannot prove man's survival after death with a demonstration that will persuade the mind that is predisposed not to believe. The basic elements of the faith we live by are generally assumed as basic postulates. Reason has the role to render them plausible, if it can.

The intuition that life is not totally annihilated when death descends has been supported by several considerations. One is the very universality of the intuition. It occurs among all people, in all cultures, from the most primitive to the most sophisticated. The expression of this belief has reflected the culture of the people among whom it occurs, and it has sometimes taken forms grotesque and occasionally even repulsive. The cult of the dead which flourished in ancient Egypt was an abomination. It led the Pharaohs to build the pyramids as sepulchers for their mummies on which an enslaved country labored through the years. The Bible protested against prac-

tices such as these. The Biblical conception that a dead body is "unclean" and that a priest especially must not be in contact with it reflects a struggle to free religion from a preoccupation with death and to center it instead in life.

The absurd reading by a primitive mind of what is written in the human heart does not necessarily invalidate a core of valid meaning in that text. What is written in our natures needs careful interpretation, but it has its contribution to make to the truth we seek concerning the riddle of our existence. The universality of the intuition that something of man survives his mortal career deserves consideration among all the factors to be weighed in understanding the destiny to which the Creator called us when He gave us birth.

Another consideration which has been cited in favor of the belief in survival is the rationality of God's plan in creation. An artist, when he creates some masterpiece, on which he has invested conscious planning and much labor, seeks to give his creation permanence, at least as much permanence as a mortal can provide for the fruit of his labor. Man is the noblest member in the hierarchy of existence to have emerged in the unfolding of God's plan. Can it be that He made him only for the transient moment, for the brief span of time which is his lot on earth? If death ends all then the entire drama of existence becomes a kind of farce.

Arguments for survival after death have come more recently from a new source—from the claims of parapsychology, which is now making a bid for recognition as a science among the sciences. Dr. J. B. Rhine of Duke University has been the protagonist of this science. He has conducted endless experiments and studied contributions relevant to his subject from other sources. He claims to have established on proof as incontestable as any on which other sciences build their con-

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clusions that there exists extrasensory perception, mental telepathy, and clairvoyance and that communications have been established with apparitions of living as well as dead persons. Much of Dr. Rhine's data is contained in his recently published volume *Extra Sensory Perception After Sixty Years*, on which he collaborated with other scientists in the field.

Summarizing the significance of these findings of parapsychology, Professor Hornell Hart, also of Duke University, has this to say on the subject: "Our physical personalities are mere vehicles through which our real selves experience the drama called 'life.' Apparitions of the living are these same vehicles; through them consciousness may at times observe and operate apart from the physical body, and may temporarily depart from the play. But, if that view should prove to be true, then death in our physical world cannot extinguish the essential selfhood which says 'I' in us. . . . Our true existence is beyond both the space and the time of earth. And the event called 'death' in our earthly lives can be but an episode in a far vaster adventure."³

From the natural sciences have come other protagonists for a belief in immortality and for the validity of a concept of retribution beyond death. This point of view has been well summarized by Ralph W. Burhoe of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in his contribution to the symposium edited by the noted astronomer Harlow Shapley under the title *Science Ponders Religion*.⁴ Man, as seen in the perspective of evolution, is not an isolated creature, bounded in time and space, which describes the boundary of his own life. He is

³ Hornell Hart: "Psychical Research and Life Beyond Death," in *Man's Destiny in Eternity*, p. 101.

⁴ New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc.; 1960.

inexorably bound to all else that is, has been, and will be. He is inseparable from "his group, his species, from all life, from all things and events in the long history of the heavens and the earth." There is a dimension of the self which is transient. It is the dimension representing the self as seen in detachment from the rest of life. But there is another dimension which represents the relatedness of the self to the rest of existence. The transient aspect of the self, identified by Dr. Burhoe with the body, is the tool through which its abiding aspect functions, and the meaning of any life is in the privileged service as a link in the unending flow of eternity. "This grander vision of self as an agent of the ever new and marvelous developments in an ordered cosmic evolution," writes Dr. Burhoe, "not only informs me of my duty, purpose and meaning; but it informs me that this program in which I am privileged to serve is not transient and accidental, but is a design guaranteed by the sacred whole. . . . My true self is not properly to be identified with what fails and dies but with the undying elements which continue, elements invisible to common sense and the unaided eye, but more clearly revealed through science."⁵

Dr. Burhoe speaks of "immortal reward" which awaits the human soul, that dimension of the self which links the self with eternity. He does not spell out the sense in which he employs the term "reward," but we may presume that it consists in the privilege of serving as a co-worker in the furtherance of the goal toward which all creation strives. But if we posit reward we must also posit punishment, both of course used in a metaphoric sense. Not all lives further the course of existence or creation. There are some who through perverse choices retard or hinder the course of existence; they

⁵ Ralph W. Burhoe: *op. cit.*, pp. 84, 85.

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are carriers of negative or destructive forces. They have lived in "hell," and "hell" continues to cling to them after the episode of their mortality is finished.

The abiding aspect of a person's identity, expressed in the values he has pursued during his time on earth, enters on a new plane of existence when mortal life has ended. It enters the structure of history to play a new role, in which the person's identity is extended beyond death. Its role is to exert an impact on the rest of life, to advance its forward movement or to retard it.

In the economy of God's universe nothing is lost. Every action counts, but man can determine in what direction his actions shall count. Every person's life, every person's act, deposits a plus or a minus in the scale of eternity. It leaves the world, in the words of Whitehead, "with a deeper or a fainter impress of God." ⁶

Heaven and hell describe the conditions released by the two courses of life which are always open to a man and between which he must make his choice. Whoever has deposited a plus in the scale of life has embraced heaven, and he will continue to possess heaven in his afterlife. Whoever has deposited a minus in the scale of life has embraced hell, and he will continue to possess hell in his afterlife.

George Santayana has written a noble definition of the ideal immortality which is won by a good life: "The better a man evokes and realizes the ideal, the more he leads the life that all others, in proportion to their worth, will seek to live after him. . . . His presence in the company of immortals thus becomes, so to speak, more pervasive. He not only vanquishes time by his own rationality, living now in the eternal, but he continually lives again in all rational beings.

⁶ Whitehead: *Religion in the Making*, p. 152.

"Since the ideal has this perpetual pertinence to mortal struggles, he who lives in the ideal . . . enjoys a double immortality. The eternal has absorbed him while he lived, and when he is dead, his influence brings others to the same absorption, making them, through the ideal identity with the best in him, reincarnations and perennial seats of all in him which he could rationally hope to rescue from destruction. He can say, without any subterfuge or desire to delude himself, that he shall not wholly die, for he will have a better notion than the vulgar of what constitutes his being."⁷

Karl Jaspers, the noted philosopher of contemporary existentialism, has written similarly: "There is no natural process of immortality, alike for all, as living and death are. Immortality does not happen by itself. I gain it if I am loving and good, but I disintegrate if my life is loveless and jumbled. . . . Immortality is the eternity that encompasses all time, but is not time. . . . Evil carries hell with it now, as virtue is its own reward."⁸

There remains a wide gap between the belief in survival and the detailed knowledge of how precisely survival is to be defined. A veil impenetrable hovers over the realm beyond our mortality. We can think by analogy to what we know. Out of what we know we can coin metaphors to bring the unknown somewhat closer to the known, but confronted rigorously, these metaphors are like the tales we tell our children to satisfy their quest to know what we cannot tell them.

Erich Fromm speaks of the man that has violated the moral claims of his life as possessing a "sick soul." The soul is the

⁷ George Santayana: *Reason in Religion* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons; 1928), pp. 271f.

⁸ Karl Jaspers: *The Future of Mankind* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press; 1961), pp. 339f.

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mysterious element of life, that animates us and energizes the various dimensions of our being; it is part of the ultimate reality which is at the heart of the universe; it is part of God. When it returns to its divine source it returns presumably in the state of its final development. The sick soul returns to God then in a state of sickness; it brings with itself corruption, failure, remorse. Another metaphor invoked in Jewish tradition is contained in the concept of the soul's purity. "O Lord, the soul Thou hast planted within me is a pure one," we say in our liturgy. The deed of evil is a stain that corrupts the soul; it can be cleansed through penitence. But what if it is not cleansed? What if we die with souls corrupted, made filthy through a life of evil? *There* is the pathos of failure which we have noted is, on the earthly plane, the very substance of hell. Such a soul carries hell with it into the realm beyond mortality. One of the noblest goals to which a person can give himself is to return his soul in a state similar to the one in which he received it, the state of innocence and purity. We return our soul in a state of innocence or purity if we have lived a good life, if we have pursued goodness and truth during our earthly existence.

More than this it is difficult to say. We must be content to live one world at a time, one life at a time. Mortal creatures cannot know what it is like to shed the mortal frame. The detailed descriptions of reward and punishment in the hereafter we must regard as a work of the imagination seeking to concretize the belief in divine retribution. What this plane of existence, the hereafter, is really like we shall know, if we shall ever know, when we cross the boundary of our mortal existence.

The concepts of "heaven" and "hell," declared Rabbi Kook,

embody an abiding truth, but taken literally they are trivialized and unworthy of a spiritual man.⁹ What is the abiding truth which lives in these concepts? The belief in "heaven" and "hell" helps to remind us that there are important stakes in what we do with our lives. It helps reinforce the exhortation of Scripture (Deuteronomy 11:26-28): "Behold I set before you this day a blessing and a curse: the blessing if you shall hearken unto the commandments of the Lord your God, which I command you this day; and the curse if you shall not hearken unto the commandments of the Lord your God." Man is free to do with himself what he wills, but grim consequences follow his actions. He can win a blessing or a curse; he can make of his life a heaven or a hell for the duration of his stay on earth and beyond it.

This lesson, the fateful alternatives which follow upon the choices we make in life, is the theme of the original story of man's sojourn in the Garden of Eden, his sin in disobeying God, and his eventual expulsion from it. Modernists have often dismissed this story as a relic of ancient folklore. But the Bible is not a collection of ancient tales. It sometimes draws on older sources, but it always converts them into a vehicle of its religious teachings concerning God and man.

"It is of no consequence to us," Rabbi Kook declared, "if there really was a golden age in the existential world, when man enjoyed great delight in a state of great physical and spiritual blessedness, or if the existential world began its unfolding from the lower to the higher. . . . The major objective of the Torah is never to record facts about antiquity as such, to tell us simple events and occurrences which once happened," he explained. Its major burden is always to express

⁹ Rabbi Kook: *Igrot* (Jerusalem: Agudah Le-Hotzaat Sifre Ha-Rayah Kook; 1946), Vol. I, Letter 184.

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“a meaning immanent in the incidents.”¹ And it is in this light that Rabbi Kook invited us to understand the Garden of Eden story.

Its essential meaning, according to Rabbi Kook, is to teach us that man was destined by the Creator for a state of happiness, but that he forfeits this happiness through sin. “It is for us to realize primarily this—that a man may have attained great distinction, with great renown and happiness due him, but he can lose all through corrupting his ways, and harm himself and his posterity for many generations after him. This lesson is conveyed to us from the story of man’s stay in the Garden of Eden, his sin, and his expulsion from it.”²

The original story of man in the Garden of Eden, and its projection into a symbol of the larger workings of divine retribution in this life and beyond it, never dimmed the faith of Jewish tradition in man’s endless possibility to find forgiveness in God’s mercy. The loss of heavenly bliss, the subjection to the negative and destructive forces associated with hell, are not the inevitable fate even of the sinner, for the door to penitence is ever open to him. This is the theme of a well-known rabbinic homily (Yerushalmi Makkot 2:6): “They asked of wisdom, What is the fate of a sinner? Wisdom replied, Evil pursues sinners. They asked of prophecy, What is the fate of a sinner? Prophecy replied, The soul that sinneth—it shall die. They asked of the Holy One, praised be He, What is the fate of a sinner? He replied, Let him repent and he will be forgiven.”

Christian interpreters, approaching the story of the Garden of Eden literally, have generally read a doctrine of fatalistic depravity into it. Adam’s sin in eating of the fruit of the tree

¹ Op. cit., Letter 134.

² Ibid.

of knowledge is supposed to have contaminated the entire human race after him, in all the generations throughout history. This fatalism is absent in Judaism. Jewish teachers knew the seriousness of sin, and the power of temptation to lure man away from the heights, but they never compromised on man's power to struggle and vanquish temptation and gain greater acceptability before God. Rabbi Kook touches on this theme in his discussion of the Garden of Eden story. He is careful to dissociate himself from the Christian interpretation of the fall of man. Adam's sin is for him not a fatal fact which has permanently disqualified man from grace. As portrayed in the Bible, Adam's sin flows not from an essential prompting of his nature but from an accident, from a conspiracy launched against him by an external tempter. "It stands to reason," expounded Rabbi Kook, "that a stumbling due to an accident must be capable of mending, whereupon man will regain permanently his high station."³

The story of Adam's fall allegorizes man's permanent need to be vigilant against temptation. It expresses the enduring finitude of man which makes him forever prone to rebel against the divine, but, as we have noted, this mark of man's finitude is also an expression of his glory, of his capacity ever to strive for perfection. It does not bemean man that he will never attain the absolute, that he will always aspire toward the Eternal but never fully attain it.

The notion that Adam's sin in itself *creates* the depravity of his descendants runs counter to the doctrine of each man's responsibility for his own life. There are scattered statements in the Bible and the Talmud which indicate an awareness that a deed is not spent in the life of the person performing it, that

³ Ibid.

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it has a kind of "fallout," for good as well as for evil, which affects future generations. But the fatalism of guilt by inheritance is specifically repudiated by the prophet Ezekiel (18:1-4, 20): "And the word of the Lord came unto me saying, What mean you that you use this proverb in the land of Israel, saying: 'The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge'? As I live, saith the Lord God, you shall not have occasion any more to use this proverb in Israel. Behold all souls are Mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is Mine. . . . The soul that sinneth, it shall die; the son shall not bear the iniquity of the father with him, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son with him; the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him."

The Rabbis noted Ezekiel's contribution to the doctrine of individual responsibility. Rabbi Yose bar Hanina put it thus (Makkot 24a): "Moses taught (Exodus 20:5) that He remembers the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, but Ezekiel came and voided it, declaring (Ezekiel 18:20), The soul that sinneth, it shall die." Rabbi Yose's declaration that Ezekiel "voided" what Moses had taught is an extreme statement, as Isaac Heinemann has pointed out.⁴ Ezekiel only softened the earlier teaching by denying the fatalism of inherited guilt. The past conditions the present and the future, but every person can extricate himself from the chain of guilt and its consequences, and turn his life in a new direction. This is the mark of his original freedom as a person, which remains his most precious endowment throughout life.

"The reality of the meaning behind the concept of hell,"

⁴ Isaac Heinemann: *Darkhay Ha-Aggadah* (Jerusalem: Hebrew University and Massadah, Ltd.; 1954), p. 89.

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declared Karl Jaspers, "is as certain to philosophical insight as the concept's symbolic nature."⁵ What should a person do in the light of the warning proclaimed by the concepts of heaven and hell? He should live life with the utmost caution, being ever zealous to choose what is good, to shun what is evil. And what should a person do if he finds himself trapped by sin and he is alarmed by the impending sway of retributive judgment which is sure to follow against him? Let him heed the advice of the Holy One, praised be He. Let him repent, and he will be forgiven.

⁵ Jaspers: *op. cit.*, p. 341.



X



The Ethical Imperative

VAST is the literature of Judaism, and imposing is the structure of doctrine, ritual, and custom which express the Jewish way of life. But one major impulse dominates clearly and unmistakably. It is the concern with ethics.

What is the basic demand of the ethical life? It is to respect God's purpose in creation. The ethical deed is the deed which furthers the unfolding life of the universe; the unethical deed is the deed which frustrates it. God's purpose is set forth in Scripture, the intuitively envisioned body of teachings concerning man and his responsibilities, revealed to prophets and sages and elaborated for us in the sacred literature of Jewish tradition. His purpose may also be glimpsed through the contemplation of the "Second Scripture," the text of nature which exhibits empirically the same goal—the quest to engender life, to preserve it, to perfect it. Man is called on to follow the rhythm which reverberates throughout creation, to conform his actions to God's purposes. In the words of

the Talmud (Shabbat 133b): "As He is merciful and gracious, you be merciful and gracious."

The definition of the ethical as that which conforms to the ways of God's providence or of the purpose immanent in nature requires serious limitation. God's providence expresses itself not only in the furtherance of life, but also in incidents of judgment which seemingly thwart life. In His own time and way God also decrees a termination for each life. The purpose immanent in nature is continually seeking to refine and to perfect each species, but it often does so by "weeding" out inferior forms. What would happen if man decided to play God and judge who is to be "weeded" out as unworthy of life? Was not this the ultimate monstrosity of Nazism, that it arrogated to itself the right to say who was to live and who was to die?

The teachers of Judaism set bounds to this call to imitate God. We may only imitate His mercy and His love, not His sternness. The sterner aspects of God's providence, those deriving from His role as Judge, are not invoked by the Rabbis as models for man's imitation (Sifre on Deuteronomy 10:12). Rabbinic thought, observed Dr. Max Kadushin, is dominated by "the idea of God's love rather than by the idea of His justice. When the Rabbis tell us to imitate God, to walk 'in the way of Heaven,' they have in mind primarily the imitation of various aspects of God's loving-kindness—mercy and compassion, graciousness, patience, forbearance."¹

The Midrash (Bereshit Rabbah 28:4) suggests that only God who has unerring knowledge can truly judge the worth of His creatures. Man looks with finite, erring eyes, and he cannot really know who is worthy of life and who is not.

¹ Max Kadushin: *The Rabbinic Mind* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America; 1952), p. 219.

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Those he is tempted to dismiss as "unworthy" may be the bearer of precious qualities of character. They may, in addition, become the progenitors of children who will make invaluable contributions to human progress.

This sensitivity to man's limitation in judging his fellow man had far reaching implication for the ethical ideal as developed by the Rabbis. It led them to question man's ability to determine whether his neighbor is truly righteous or wicked. The human heart is known only to God, and He alone can know man's true worth. As practicing judges in courts of law, the Rabbis refused to impose the death penalty for any category of crime (Kiddushin 49b, Mishnah Makkot 1:10). Only the Author of life, they felt, has the right to put an end to life. Man usurps a divine prerogative when he takes such powers into his own hands.

The conventional definition of ethics limits it to human relations. But the ethical system in Judaism is broader in scope; it embraces the whole of existence. The Psalmist noted that God's "mercies are over all His works," and man, in directing his conduct by the divine model, must be similarly universal in his ethical endeavor. The concern of Judaism, declared Rabbi Kook, is "the longing that all things attain a state of well-being, without any reservation as to those whose good is sought or the degree of the good sought for them" (*Orot Yisrael* 1:4).

Judaism affirmed the value of existence. After each act of creation the Bible quotes God as pronouncing upon it the formula of approval: And the Lord saw that it is good. After the creation was completed the formula became even more enthusiastic (Genesis 1:31): "And God saw everything which He had created, and behold, it was very good." Rabbi

J. H. Hertz notes in his Biblical commentary: "Each created thing is good in itself, but when combined and united the totality is proclaimed 'very good.' Everything in the universe was as the Creator willed it—nothing superfluous, nothing lacking—a harmony."

Especially man is portrayed in terms of high worth. He is the climax in the process of creation, and according to the Bible, the Creator fashioned him in His own image and after His own likeness, as a mark of the special love lavished upon him.

The Rabbis elaborated often on the excellence of creation. Everything in creation is of value. There are elements in existence whose worth is unclear to us, but this is due to our ignorance. If we were to penetrate deeper into the nature of things we would discover that there is value in all things. The Rabbis analyzed the subtle working of life and expounded how the elements we are often tempted to dismiss as evil have their efficacy. In the economy of existence there is a place for suffering, for death, and even for the evil passion which lures us astray but which enables us, by resisting it, to earn life's highest prize, the moral firmness which we call good character. It is a good world which God created, but man must know how to live in it, or he may bring ruin on himself and destroy his world. The Rabbis picture God as introducing Adam to the world which was to be his home with these words of caution (*Kohelet Rabbah* 7): "See My works, how beautiful, how excellent they all are; be careful not to misbehave lest you destroy My world."

God's world is the realm of nature, which has slowly ascended toward order, toward the perfection of each species, and above all toward the emergence of man. But God's world is also the edifice of civilization man has built through the

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slow stages of his development. Man can thwart all this. The power which has enabled him to establish civilization is in itself a neutral power. It can be used for constructive as well as destructive ends. And man has often misused this power and made of it a tool for committing aggression against civilization instead of protecting it and advancing it. Especially in our time has man's command of power grown to proportions which enable him literally to destroy the world. On the other hand, he can also, if he wills it, by using this power constructively, create a new epoch of prosperity and well-being for all the inhabitants of the earth. How will he use this fateful command of power?

The ethical imperative is in its first expression a restraining, a limiting, force. It summons us to curb the destructive tendencies in ourselves and in society which would dissipate the resources of the world, thwarting God's work of creation. But man also has a positive obligation, to be an active protagonist of the world, an agent for its continued preservation and development. He fulfills this responsibility when he shares in the propagation of the race, when he engages in a useful occupation, and when he accepts involvement in the problems of his society.

Judaism regards every person as under an obligation to marry and raise a family. Children guarantee the continuance of the human race, and it is every person's duty to share in the assurance of life's continuity. Indeed, the first commandment given man was the commandment of procreation. Immediately after the first couple came into the world the Bible describes God as addressing them: "Be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth and subdue it . . ." (Genesis 1:28).

Judaism also stressed the duty to be productive, to engage in some useful occupation. Idleness begets a deep inner dis-

trass, it reduces life to emptiness and boredom, but it is also an evasion of a responsibility one owes God as well as man. According to one Talmudist (*Midrash Ha-Gadol* on Exodus 20:9), the fourth commandment of the Decalogue ordained not only repose on the seventh day of the week, but also work on the six days, for does not this commandment begin with the pronouncement, "Six days you shall labor and do all your work"? Even in the Utopian world of the Garden of Eden prior to Adam's disobedience, the Bible describes man as subject to work. Adam was not to be an idler in that garden. The Lord "placed him in the Garden of Eden to till it and tend it" (Genesis 2:15). Work is the medium through which we "subdue" or master the world, and every person is called to share in the tasks of this mastery.

Judaism was equally emphatic in demanding of a person that he involve himself in the affairs of his society. The Rabbis frowned on those who for the sake of total consecration to the intellectual or spiritual life withdraw from society to live in an ivory tower of pure devotion to their ideal. "Do not separate yourself from the community," we are admonished in the *Ethics of the Fathers* (2:5). The obligations of social involvement rest in fact even more decisively on the intellectually and spiritually advanced members of the community. For it is social action which determines the quality of our civilization, the advancement or the retardation of human values.

Living in a world where all things are endowed with value, what must be the supreme goal of the ethical life? It is, we noted, the same goal which the Creator has pursued when He launched creation—it is the advancement of life. An action is good if it furthers life; it is evil if it hinders it. We speak of life in the present context in the broadest

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terms; it refers not only to man, but to all existing things. But life, so conceived, divides into gradations of value, which are reflected in the hierarchy of our ethical goals. The lowest order of value is represented by inanimate nature; above it is animal life; the highest level of value and correspondingly of ethical concern is represented by man.

The most elemental concept of Jewish ethics is *bal tashhit* (see *Otzar Yisrael*, "bal tashhit"); it is the injunction against destructiveness. One who wantonly destroys any object is an *ovayr al bal tashhit*, a transgressor of the injunction against destructiveness. The original statement of this principle is found in Deuteronomy 20:19-20, which forbids cutting down a fruit bearing tree when laying siege to an enemy city in time of war. This prohibition was looked upon by the Rabbis as embodying the general principle that we must be solicitous of the value of all things and that any act of wanton destructiveness is sinful.

The Rabbis illustrate the principle of *bal tashhit* by citing various acts of recklessness against objects, whether they be part of nature or man-made. The breaking of a vessel in a fit of anger, or the tearing of a garment, the closing of a spring, denying its precious water to others who can make good use of it, or the needless wasting of food—these are all instances of destructiveness forbidden by the principle of *bal tashhit*. The Rabbis cautioned against excessive tearing of the garment in the rite of mourning so as not to render it unfit for further wear.

It is wanton destructiveness which is forbidden, such as occurs in an outburst of anger. Where the action is motivated by a positive purpose, it is of course no longer destructive, and it is not in the category of *bal tashhit*. Thus it was deemed perfectly proper to cut down a tree if one required the site

for another purpose or because the tree was a detriment to the surrounding area.

The principle of *bal tashhit* became part of the active ethical consciousness of the Jewish people. It even entered the Yiddish vernacular. It became idiomatic to say: It is an *avayrah* (transgression) to discard something of value or to expose any object to damage by the elements. The transgression involved is of course the injunction of *bal tashhit*, the prohibition against destructiveness. The world is the Lord's, and He invited us to make ourselves at home in it, to use its resources to our heart's content, but this does not permit us to turn into vandals who destroy because they feel a thrill in destruction.

A second level of ethical value taught in Judaism concerns the attitude toward animals. Judaism demanded great solicitude for the welfare of animals. This was expressed in the concept *tza'ar ba'alay hayyim*, literally, "pain of a living creature" (see *Otzar Yisrael*, "*tza'ar ba'alay hayyim*"). We are continually reminded to be sensitive to the pain suffered by living creatures and to do all we can to spare them such pain.

Animals were part of the kingdom of nature over which man was given jurisdiction in the Bible. But he was only to use animals for work. The original prescription in the Bible, as given to Adam, did not include the right to kill animals for food. It was only after the flood when civilization began anew with Noah, as told in Biblical narrative, that the original law was modified, and man was permitted to eat meat. But the Bible continued to concern itself with the protection of animals from human abuse. The animal was given a day of rest in the law of the Sabbath. An animal was not to be muzzled when engaged in threshing. It was forbidden to team

an ox and a donkey in a common yoke, for the weaker animal would suffer undue hardship. A cow and its calf were not to be slaughtered on the same day to spare the mother watching the calf put to death.

The Rabbis extended the principle of *tza'ar ba'alay hayyim* and created additional safeguards for animal welfare. The Rabbis cautioned against the purchase of animals unless one makes provision for their proper care. They demanded feeding the animal before one sits down to one's own meal. They always associated greatness of character with tenderness shown to animals. Moses, they suggested, was tested for his qualification to lead the Israelites by the love he showed to a lamb in his flock. The lamb had strayed, and Moses pursued it angrily, but when he saw that it had stopped to drink from a pond he was overcome with compassion, and he carried the lamb back in his arms. It was then, according to the Rabbis, that God selected him for his mission to lead the Israelites out of bondage. Having demonstrated his tenderness with the lamb, God was reassured that he would also know how to be tender with the children of Israel.

It was the concern with curbing the pain caused to animals in ancient culture that motivated many of the elements in the Jewish dietary laws, as we shall have occasion to indicate in another section of this work. The prohibition of cutting a limb from a living animal, the prohibition of eating blood, the regulation of slaughter so as to effect a speedy and as painless a death for the animal as possible, are major provisions in the dietary laws, and the humane motivation is implicit in all of them.

The most dramatic expression of the concern for animal welfare was the prohibition of the sport of hunting. It was permissible to kill an animal for food or to use its skin as leather or

parchment, but killing as a sport, to enjoy the sensation of overpowering the animal and watching it die, was deemed by the Rabbis an act of unmitigated brutality.

The attitude of Jewish ethics toward hunting is well summarized in a decision by Rabbi Ezekiel Landau.² He had been approached with the following query, put to him by a well-to-do Jewish landowner: "I have been favored by God with a large estate consisting of villages and forests, the latter swarming with wild animals. Is it permitted to hunt these animals as a mere pastime? Will such an act constitute a violation of the laws concerning cruelty to animals?" The rabbi's reply was emphatic: "I am surprised that you were moved to ask such a question. We find in the Torah the sport of hunting imputed only to such fierce characters as Nimrod and Esau, never to any patriarchs or their descendants. The customary blessing 'Thou shalt outlive,' offered to one donning a new garment, is, according to a decision of Rabbi Weil, omitted altogether in the case of a fur coat. Such a blessing might suggest that killing of animals is not only condoned but actually desirable, which is contrary to the verse in Psalms, 'And His mercies are over all His creatures.' . . . But I cannot comprehend how a Jew could even dream of killing animals merely for the pleasure of hunting, when he has no immediate need for the bodies of the creatures. . . ."

Rabbi Moses Isserles, the great medieval codifier of Jewish law, explained the practice of not wearing leather shoes on Yom Kippur, adhered to by many Jews, as an expression of concern for animal welfare. On the holiest day of the year we are to shed the symbol of our predatory nature, the shoes which were made from the skin of a living creature. It is

² S. Wind: *Rabbi Yehezkel Landau* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Daat Torah; 1961), p. 54.

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generally permitted to wear leather shoes, but this permission is a tragic yielding to necessity, and on the holiest day of the year, according to Isserles, we ought to reach out for a higher moral standard than is expected of us on other days.

The highest level of value is represented by man, and Jewish tradition expressed it by the concept of *kevod ha-beriyot*, the dignity of the human person. The foundation of all Biblical teaching, declared Ben Azzai, is the verse in Genesis 5:1: "This is the book of the generations of man, in the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made He him." A man bears the divine likeness upon himself, and he is therefore of infinite worth, beyond all other creatures, in the hierarchy of life.

Every person is of infinite worth in the eyes of God and he must be treated with infinite solicitude at the hands of man. Every person is unique in body as in mind. He is an irreplaceable element in the pattern of creation. Every person thus has a right to feel (Sanhedrin 37a): "Because of me was the world created." The scheme of existence would indeed be defective without him.

The whole human race, according to Scripture, derived from a single person, Adam. A single person is thus more than the one man who stands before us. He is a world, he is all the unborn generations destined to descend from him. These considerations led the Rabbis to generalize (Sanhedrin 37a): He who saves a single person is as though he saved the whole world, and he who destroys a single person is as though he destroyed the whole world.

Jewish tradition did not hesitate to proclaim the ministry to man's welfare as higher than communion with God. This was inferred from the example set by Abraham (Shabbat 127a). He was conversing with God, according to the Bible, but

when he saw three strangers who seemed to him in need of hospitality he interrupted his communion with God and rushed to attend to the strangers. This is the pattern by which a person ought to model his life. God's greatness is accompanied by a kind of humility. His primary wish is not His own adulation, but rather the well-being of His creatures, especially man who is His choicest creation.

The attitude which Judaism demanded from a person toward his fellow man is love. This is expressed in Leviticus 19:18: "And you shall love your neighbor as yourself." Rabbi Akiba pronounced this the most all-inclusive formulation of the human ideal in the entire Torah (Sifra on Leviticus 19:18).

The Rabbis rejected the ideal of "enlightened selfishness," which was destined to be proclaimed as the height of moral excellence in nineteenth-century liberalism. "Whoever says, What is mine is mine and what is yours is yours, is of medium ethical stature, and some say that this is of the standard of the wicked city of Sodom," runs the statement in the Mishnah (Avot 5:13). A scrupulous separation of "mine" from "thine" cannot be deemed particularly virtuous. Our duty is to further and promote actively the well-being of another, as an expression of the ideal of equal love which Scripture ordains as the basic attitude to prevail between man and man.

The commandment to love our neighbor with a love equal to what we feel for ourselves represents the summit of the ethical ideal in Judaism. As a guide to life it suffers however from serious deficiency. Can we order human relations on love alone? Love, as generally defined, is an emotion, and it cannot be invoked at will. We can command action, but we cannot command feelings. How shall we act toward people if we do not feel love for them?

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The degree of love commanded is especially extreme. It is difficult to achieve a total identity with our fellow man; there is a priority of claim our own self makes on us which it is difficult for a person to obliterate. Our neighbor, moreover, is not one but many, and how can each of us assume the burden of concerning ourselves with the fate of the uncounted multitudes who enter into the category of neighbor? And what if the love of self and the love of neighbor are in conflict and we are torn by contradictory claims? Our neighbor, too, may appear to us unworthy of our love; he may be a wicked man scheming violence against us.

There is a sense in which we owe love even to an enemy, but must not our action reflect the difference between neighbor and neighbor? Even a father who loves his children will subject his wayward child to discipline, or else he will spoil him. A love lavished indiscriminately on the good and the evil alike is in effect a mark of cruelty against the rest of mankind who deserve to be protected from evil. Such indiscriminate love is indeed a mark of cruelty against the evil man himself who needs to face the consequences of evil that he might be prodded to self-correction.

Jewish teachers understood the call to equate self and neighbor in an equal love as an extreme statement, which cannot be given literal fulfillment. On the practical plane they supplemented the ideal of love with the ideal of justice. The concept of justice in Jewish ethics must not be placed in contrast to love; it must rather be seen as a supplement to it. Indeed, the Hebrew word for justice, *tzedek*, yielded the word *tzedakah*, which is sometimes translated as "righteousness" but whose real meaning is better rendered by the English term "mercy." It is so used in many passages of the liturgy, as in the *Avinu Malkaynu* prayer: "Our Father our King be

gracious unto us and answer us, for we lack good deeds; grant us mercy [*tzedakah*] and deliver us." As a derivative meaning *tzedakah* came to be identified with charity. Acts of charity are a practical application of the merciful disposition.

Tzedek, or justice, as here conceived, denotes the concern felt for another person because of his intrinsic dignity as a person, regardless of how we may feel toward him emotionally. Rabbi Obadiah Seforno reflects this in his interpretation of the verse bidding us to love our neighbor as we love ourselves. The practical application of the call for equal love, he declared, is "to love for your neighbor what you would have loved for yourself were you in his place." Hillel's well-known version of the golden rule has the same objective. It translates the demand for equal love into a principle of equity which is capable of practical application. "That which is hateful to you do not do unto others."

The emotional aspect of love may arise as a by-product of the active concern we feel for another. There is a famous principle in psychology known as the James-Lange theory of emotion. According to this it is the deed of mercy and goodness which gradually inspires the sense of emotional identification we call love. Indeed the Scriptural command to love a neighbor is preceded by other ethical imperatives, not to be unjust to our neighbor, to gossip about him, to bear him a grudge or be vengeful against him, to be indifferent to his plight, to rebuke him in all candor if we feel aggrieved against him but not hate him in our hearts. Rabbi Hezekiah ben Manoah, in his Biblical commentary, explains that the call to love our neighbor must be seen, in the light of the preceding commandments, as an assurance that if we should deal with our neighbor equitably, bonds of love will arise among

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people and a durable peace will be established in the world.

The love which is demanded of us does not call for an obliteration of the self. The base in the hierarchy of values is indeed the obligation one has for one's own welfare. The Rabbis stressed the duty a person has to preserve his own health, to equip himself for earning an honorable livelihood, to marry and raise a family (Kiddushin 29a). If life is precious then a person must see his own life too as precious, and who better than he can assume primary responsibility toward meeting the claims of his own life? But the self is not an ultimate; we are part of the larger enterprise of life, and our responsibilities reach out to embrace the needs of other men.

The Bible makes it a point to free our concern for other people from dependence on the emotional prompting of love as a sentiment. It declares explicitly that a person has claims on us regardless of the state of our feelings toward him. In ordaining the duty to return a neighbor's straying ox or sheep or any lost article, the Bible adds: "And if thy neighbor be not nigh unto thee, and thou know him not, then thou shalt bring it home to thy house, and it shall be with thee till thy brother require it" (Deuteronomy 22:1-2). The Bible specifies further that even the person you deem an enemy has a claim for your consideration. Thus we are told in Exodus 23:4-5: "If thou meet thine enemy's ox or his ass going astray, thou shalt surely bring it back to him again. If thou see the ass of him who hateth thee lying under its burden, thou shalt forbear to pass him by; thou shalt surely release it with him."

Jewish teachers also freed the ethical ideal from being wholly dependent on an individual's improvisation. The basic incidents of human want where our love for others is most

urgently needed were to be met by social institutions dedicated to human welfare. The Bible imposed a tax on a farmer's income, a tithe on each year's produce, to be awarded to the poor; it similarly assigned to the poor the produce grown on the corner of the field, the stray ears of grain left in the field as well as the sheaves forgotten during the harvest. All fields were to be left fallow every seventh year, and the spontaneous growth was to be left to animals and to the poor. There were various other provisions for the protection of the poor, the orphan, the widow, and the stranger.

The Rabbis of the Talmud extended the scope of the welfare legislation in Judaism. They regulated the rights of property, insisting that it ranks lower than the rights of persons. They sought to fix a code of conduct for the merchant and the workman, establishing the concept of an equitable profit, an equitable wage, and an equitable performance of a day's work (Bava Batra 8b).

They took steps to alleviate the conditions of the underprivileged members of society. The poor were provided with the means of subsistence, and every effort was made to protect their dignity as persons, even though they were dependent on others to maintain them. The Rabbis discouraged begging from door to door. Indigent townsmen were given a weekly allowance for food and clothing. Transients received their allowance daily. Ready food was also kept available to cope with immediate needs. For the poor traveler and the homeless, public inns were frequently built on the high roads. All these facilities were maintained from the proceeds of a general tax to which all residents of a community contributed (Tosefta Peah 4:8-13).

Non-Jews residing in Jewish communities were to share in all the beneficences which the Jewish community held out to

its own members. Jews were ordained to sustain their needy, to visit their sick, and to bury their dead. As the Talmud puts it (Gittin 61a): "We are obligated to feed non-Jews residing among us even as we feed Jews; we are obligated to visit their sick as we visit the Jewish sick; we are obligated to attend to the burial of their dead, even as we attend to the burial of Jewish dead." The Rabbis base their demand on the ground that these are "the ways of peace."

The Jewish ethical tradition took form when slavery was an integral part of economic life. Jewish ethics did not outlaw slavery, but it sought to safeguard the slave as a personality endowed by the Creator with rights which are sacred. Though the law allows slavery, Maimonides wrote (*Mishneh Torah, Hilkhoh Avadim* 9:8): "It is nevertheless of the measure of piety and the way of wisdom to be merciful, to practice justice, not to inflict a heavy yoke on one's slave, and not to vex him. We ought to give him to eat of every food, and of every drink. The old sages used to give their slaves of every dish they ate themselves, they fed their cattle and their slaves before they themselves dined. . . . Likewise one must not offend him either with the hand or with words . . . and thus we are told expressly of the beautiful traits of Job, in which he took pride, 'If I despised the cause of my manservant or maidservant when they contended with me . . . Did not He that made me in the womb make him?' (Job 31:13-15). Hardness of heart is to be found only among the pagan idolators, but the seed of Abraham . . . they are obligated to be merciful over all. And thus it is implied in the attributes of the Holy One, praised be He, which He commanded us to imitate: 'And His mercies are over all His works' " (Psalms 145:9).

Throughout Talmudic times the Jews lived under the domination of foreign imperialisms; in Palestine under the Ro-

mans and in Babylonia under the Parthians and neo-Persians. Whether a free Jewish commonwealth would have developed a democratic representative government, we do not know. But within the framework of the limited autonomy which the Jews enjoyed, they did develop certain democratic institutions. The most important instrument of Jewish autonomy was Jewish civil and religious law, and the Talmud expressed the theory that the ultimate sanction of all law is the consent of the people who are to be governed by it. Judges and legislators were cautioned not to enact decrees unless a majority of the people find it possible to conform to them. Any decree which is resisted by a popular majority has, *ipso facto*, lost its validity and been rendered obsolete. Indeed, the Talmud even traced the authority of the Bible itself not so much to its divine source as to the consent of the people who freely agreed to live by it (Avodah Zarah 36a, Shabbat 88a).

Social stability frequently calls for disciplined behavior; and in the field of social and religious conduct, the Talmud called upon the individuals to conform to the majority decisions of the duly constituted authorities who interpreted Jewish law. In the field of opinion, however, the individual remained essentially free to believe and speak in accordance with the dictates of his own conscience. Indeed, there has never been formulated an official creed in Judaism as a criterion of loyalty to the mandates of Jewish life. And even in law, the minority could continue defending its position in the hope that the majority might eventually be moved to reconsider its judgment. As the Rabbis saw it, the opinions of majorities and minorities are equally "the words of the living God"; they both represent aspects of truth and are equally precious. The Talmudists themselves preserved all dissident opinions which developed in their discussions and even recorded them

side by side with the majority opinions which became authoritative law (Eduyot 1:5, Eruvin 13b).

Under the inspiration of the Rabbis, Babylonian Jewry developed a system of democratically constituted town councils which were charged with the administration of local municipalities. All those residing in a community for a year or over enjoyed the right to participate in the election of the seven town councilors. The functions of these town councils were far-reaching, including the supervision of economic, religious, educational, and philanthropic activities of the people. On important issues, town meetings were held in which the will of the people could be ascertained more directly. Certain local officials were of course appointed by the head of the Jewish community, the Patriarch in Palestine and the Exilarch in Babylonia. But the most important requirement in all such appointments was that they meet with the public approval. In the words of the Talmud, "We must not appoint a leader over the people without first consulting them, as it is written, 'See, the Lord has called by name Bezalel, the son of Uri' (Exodus 35:30). The Holy One, praised be He, asked Moses, 'Is Bezalel acceptable to you?' He replied, 'Sovereign of the universe, if he is acceptable to Thee, how much more so to me!' God said to him, 'Nevertheless go and consult the people . . .'" (Megillah 27a, Berakhot 55a).

Jewish ethics is very much concerned with the protection of society against the perpetration of evil. It is another application of *tzedek*, or justice. The application of justice in a judicial determination of wrongdoing is usually designated in Hebrew by the term *mishpat*. But justice even in this sense of *mishpat* must not be placed in opposition to mercy and love. For it is directed primarily at the innocent, whom it seeks to safeguard, rather than at the aggressor, whom it seeks to

curb. The curbing of the aggressor is an incident in the process of protecting life. But the aggressor is not excluded from the scope of solicitousness in Jewish law and ethics.

The Talmud ordained with great emphasis that every person charged with the violation of some law be given a fair trial, and before the law all were to be scrupulously equal, whether a king or a pauper. One of two litigants was not to appear in court in expensive robes when the other came in tatters lest there be a swaying of the juror-judges. Particularly in criminal cases did the Talmud seek to protect the accused against a miscarriage of justice. Circumstantial evidence, however convincing, was not acceptable. At least one of the judges was to act as the defense counsel. The juror-judges could reverse a vote from guilty to not guilty, but not vice versa. The younger members of the court were first to announce their vote so as not to be influenced by the actions of their seniors. Whereas in civil cases a majority of one was sufficient to establish guilt, in criminal cases a majority of two was required.

Even when he was found guilty, the person who committed a crime had not lost his status as a person whose life is endowed with value. The larger ends of safeguarding the community may require his punishment, but whatever punishment is inflicted upon him must be humanized by a persistent love, not brutalized by vengeance. Some Rabbis advocated the abolition of capital punishment, and it was agreed that any court that inflicts capital punishment once in seven years had exhibited brutality. The execution even of the most violent criminal is a great tragedy. For he too was formed in the divine image and had been endowed with infinite possibilities for good (Shevuot 31a; Sanhedrin 43a, 45a, 46b; Tosefta Sanhedrin 8:3; Mishnah Makkot 1:10, Sanhedrin 6:5).

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The emergence of a legal system under the inspiration of the ethical impulse is on the one hand a victory for the ethical ideal. For it guarantees performance. The measure of ethical action which enters the zone of legal obligation is freed from the uncertainty of subjective feeling. A system of relief for the poor under the direction of the law offers the poor a modicum of security, and it relieves the sensitive citizen of anxiety that a neighbor may be without food. But we pay a price for the reduction of ethics to law. For law is impersonal; it treats people as ciphers, as statistical units. It cannot reckon with the individual needs of people, with their varying circumstances. The heart of ethical action is concern, it is the feeling of identification. But do not these feelings wither when we have institutionalized benevolent action and have reduced it to the impersonal operation of a legal system?

Jewish teachers were aware of this danger and they cautioned against it. The zone of legal action for the implementation of our ethical ideal was a minimum of basic guarantees given the person in need. But it did not exhaust the obligation of the sensitive citizen; his duty was to act *lifnim mi-shurat ha-din*, "beyond the line required by law" (Mekhilta on Exodus 18:20). Indeed law alone is an insufficient basis for the proper ordering of human relations.

Law concerns itself with "rights," but a society in which each person is primarily concerned with his "rights" will break into endless antagonism and conflict. A society can endure only if people are prepared to overlook, to forego, to confront one another as brother in a spirit of mutual service and love. Jerusalem was destroyed, according to Rabbi Johanan (Bava Metzia 88a), because its inhabitants acted only on the letter of the law. The principle of equity plays a large part in Talmudic jurisprudence. Men are continually asked to do

more than what the law requires. The Rabbis cite various cases in which people of ethical sensitivity acted on a higher standard than the one called for by the law, and their conduct is hailed as exemplary.

The active concern for another person's welfare, beyond what is required by law, takes on many forms, but none is prized as much as *gemilut hasadim*, acts of pure benevolence or loving-kindness. This includes lending people of one's funds without taking interest, visiting the sick, showing hospitality to strangers, providing a proper outfit for a poor bride, comforting the bereaved, caring for the orphan and the widow. According to Simeon the Just (Avot 1:2), acts of pure benevolence constitute one of the three pillars that sustain the world; the other two are the study of Torah and the worship of God. These acts are called pure benevolence because they are rendered with no ulterior motivation, but out of a spirit of a genuine concern for a fellow man.

The concern for human welfare inspired by the ethical concept of *tzedek* expressed itself in the various charitable endeavors to alleviate the condition of the needy members in society. But it did more. It extended itself to the broader goal of changing the conditions which create need. The highest degree of charity, taught Maimonides (*Mishneh Torah, Hilkhhot Matenot Aniyim* 10:7), is to help a person "become self-supporting." Every vision of the Messianic age in Judaism includes the conception of a new order in society, one that will eliminate poverty and want.

It is these considerations which explain the strong concern with the issues of social justice in Jewish tradition. The specific legislation of the Bible and the Talmud is in many cases obsolete, for law is always directed to specific circumstances of time and place. Thus slavery has ceased to be a problem in

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modern society. But the social legislation in Jewish tradition embodies a principle of concern for human welfare which continues to demand ever-newer application. As Rabbi Seymour Siegel recently declared, the Torah "does not present a blueprint of the perfect society which is to be followed in all its details, in all epochs. The Torah, though directed to all generations, is also proclaimed to each specific generation asking it to fulfill what it can and must fulfill within the limitation of its possibilities."³

There is no precise and universally agreed definition of what constitutes a society's "possibilities" at any given time in realizing the ideal of social justice. Some of the fiercest social conflicts have been waged on the determination of this issue. Jewish tradition has served the Jew as a great school in ethical sensitivity. It has predisposed the Jew to favor the ever greater involvement of the state in coping with the problems incidental to a modern industrial economy, to evolve forms of taxation placing the burden on the economically privileged classes, to protect the unemployed, the sick, and the aged through various forms of social insurance, to regulate conditions of work, as well as the practices of business, so as to minimize the abuses of social inequality and guarantee a more equitable standard of living to the lower classes in society.

The ethical system of the Rabbis demanded that a person concern himself with the spiritual welfare of his neighbor no less than with his material welfare. One owes his neighbor honest criticism when he sees him straying from the right course. Such criticism must be reiterated again and again, "even four or five times," but one must be sure to express

³ Seymour Siegel: "Religion and Social Action," *Proceedings of the Rabbinical Assembly of America* (Philadelphia: Press of Maurice Jacobs Inc.; 1961), p. 161.

this criticism with delicacy and tact so as not to cause him visible embarrassment (Sifra on Leviticus 19:17). One is obligated to share one's learning with his neighbor. The riches of the Torah are, like material riches, a trust to be administered for larger human welfare. Whoever has studied the Torah and has hugged his knowledge for his own edification, without teaching it to others, has shown contempt for God's word, according to Rabbi Meir (Sifre on Numbers 15:31).

The greatest expression of concern for a person's spiritual welfare is the help we owe him when he is striving to achieve penitence for some act of wrongdoing. One must never remind him of his former transgression. In the words of Rabbi Simeon ben Yohai (Kiddushin 40b): "Even if a person lived as a wicked man all his life and repented only toward the end, one must never again mention his wickedness, as it is written (Ezekiel 33:12), 'And as for the wickedness of the wicked, it shall not be a source of stumbling to him on the day he turns from his wickedness.'"

The Rabbis sought to facilitate the penitence of people who had taken property by fraud or violence. They asked the victims not to accept restitution because the demand for restitution might deter the guilty person, out of fear of impoverishment, and force him to continue in his life of lawlessness. The law of penitence required of him to offer restitution, but the refusal to accept it was to serve as a dramatic act of encouragement, to help him make a complete break with his past. As the Talmud phrases it (Bava Kamma 94b): "If robbers or usurers repent and of their own free will come and seek to make restitution, it is not right to accept from them, and he who accepts from them acts in a manner displeasing to the sages." The Talmud reports that the inspiration for this ruling was the case of a man who sought to make restitution

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in an act of penitence, and his wife dissuaded him with the argument that if he sought to repay everything he owed, he would leave himself with absolutely nothing. He heeded her admonition and continued on his life of wrongdoing. It should be noted that the ruling against accepting restitution was not a ruling of law. It asked of a person to act beyond the measure of the law; it asked him to forego what was legally due him as an encouragement to his neighbor, to ease his way back to a life of honesty and righteousness.

Jewish teachers also considered the occasional conflicts which arise in our pursuit of the ethical life. Sometimes there are conflicts between ethics and ritual, and occasionally there are internal conflicts within our ethical system itself, when different aspects of ethical duty press upon us, and we find that they are inconsistent with each other and that we must perform one and ignore the other.

The law of the Sabbath, for instance, forbids work on the seventh day. Does this mean that the physician must suspend healing on the Sabbath? What of an emergency in which any delay in attending to the sick is likely to prove fatal? We are commanded to tell the truth. But are there not circumstances when it is an act of mercy to veil the truth from a person? Are we ever justified in disobeying our government? What if our government pursues policies which are clearly outrageous to our sense of justice? It is our duty to obey a superior officer while under discipline of military service, but what if the orders given outrage our every feeling of morality and seem to us altogether contrary to reason and justice? Is birth control ever justified? Is abortion? We believe in the right, indeed, the duty of self-defense, but does this mean that *any* action is justified if it is in self-defense?

The dilemmas here posed are among the most painful in

the ethical life. They are dealt with cogently in Jewish tradition, and we are given a body of general ethical principles which are capable of guiding us as we deal with these ethical dilemmas in our own lives.

All commandments, whether ethical or ritual, have as their objective, according to Jewish teachers, the enhancement of human life. The Rabbis derived this by inference from Leviticus 18:5: "You shall therefore keep My statutes and My ordinances which if a man does he shall live by them" (Yoma 85b). The statutes and judgments were given then to beget life and not death. Therefore, the Rabbis concluded, when the commandment threatens to undermine life, it becomes inoperative and is to be suspended.

It was in the light of this principle that the Babylonian teacher Samuel resolved the conflict between the commandment to keep the Sabbath and an existing peril to human life. The Sabbath, in other words, was a means of enhancing life. When its observance would, however, endanger life it was to be superseded. Another teacher, Rabbi Jonathan ben Joseph, offered this generalization: "The Sabbath was entrusted to you, not you to the Sabbath." The Sabbath was meant for man, to sanctify his life, but it must give way when keeping it would imperil his life. This interpretation, according to some scholars, was originally adopted at the time of the Maccabean revolt against the Syrian-Greeks in the second century before the Common Era. The prevailing observance of the Sabbath had endangered the national cause; the enemy simply delayed military operations until the Sabbath, when the Jews did not resist. The reinterpretation of the law helped make for the Maccabean victory and the national and religious liberation which followed.

The same reasoning is involved in the problem of telling

the truth. It is one of the basic commandments to be scrupulously honest in word and deed. Truth is the seal of God Himself, according to Rabbi Hanina (Shabbat 55a), and to be truthful is the prime duty of man. Rabban Simeon ben Gamaliel said (Avot 1:18): "The world rests on three foundations, truth, justice and peace." The first foundation of world order, then, is truth. There are occasions, however, when telling the truth might prove injurious to human welfare, and tragic though it is, we are then obligated to compromise and depart from the truth.

The Rabbis derived this from an episode of Scripture (Genesis 18:12-14). When Sarah had been promised that she was due to give birth to a child, the Bible reports that she was incredulous, because she deemed herself past the age of bearing children and because, she added also, "My husband is old." God rebuked her incredulity, but in quoting her remark to Abraham, He omitted her reflection on his own old age. The Rabbis suggest that God altered her statement so as to avoid the possible displeasure of Abraham at his wife's feeling that he was too old for the role of father. And they generalized that it is legitimate to alter a statement for the sake of avoiding friction between a husband and wife or in any other instance when human welfare would be served by it (Yevamot 65b).

The extent to which a person may depart from strict veracity was a subject of disagreement between the Shammaites and the Hillelites, the two major schools of thought in Talmudic jurisprudence. The case at issue involves the proper greeting for a bride. The Shammaites maintained that one speaks of the bride "as she is"; the Hillelites held, on the contrary, that one must always say: "Beautiful and gracious bride!" The two schools continued the argument thus (Ke-

tubot 17a): "The House of Shammai said to the House of Hillel, If she was lame or blind, is one to say of her, Beautiful and gracious bride? Did not the Torah (Exodus 23:7) exhort us: 'Keep far from a false utterance?' Said the House of Hillel to the House of Shammai, In the light of your logic, suppose your neighbor made an unwise purchase, should one commend it to him or deprecate it? Surely one ought to commend it to him. And therefore did the sages say, 'A person should always assume an agreeable disposition toward his fellow man.' "

We have another instance involving a justified compromise of the commandment to tell the truth, in dealing with the state.

The Jewish people in the early centuries of the Common Era lived in two major centers of political authority, the Babylonian and the Roman empires. The Babylonian state exercised authority over its Jewish subjects legitimately. The Jews lived there as a free community, they enjoyed the benefit of its government and were subject to its laws. The Babylonian Talmudist, Samuel, ruled accordingly (Gittin 10b): "The law of the state is a proper law." The Jews, in other words, were obligated, on moral and religious grounds, to obey the law emanating from the Babylonian state.

But the situation of the Jews under Rome was different. Certainly the Jews of Palestine who found themselves under Roman rule because Rome had committed aggression against their country and reduced it to a Roman province could not look upon the edicts of the Roman procurators with the same feelings. Roman law in a conquered province was like Nazi law in Nazi-occupied lands; it was the imposition of arbitrary power. The teachers of Jewish ethics reflected this difference when they ruled that giving a Roman tax collector inaccu-

rate information did not constitute a moral transgression.⁴

The attitude of Judaism toward the obligation of citizenship in any modern state reflects this distinction. A state like the Nazi state, whose law is repugnant to the moral sense, is without legitimacy before the human conscience, and the defiance of its authority is consistent with the higher moral claims to which a person is subject. But under normal circumstances the law emanating from the state carries authority and one is duty bound, on ground of religious obligation, to render it obedience. Apart from the sanctions with which the state enforces obedience to its laws, a Jew sensitive to his religious commitments has additional motivations to fulfill his civic obligations. He is religiously obligated to do so.

A contemporary incident in the conflict between the duty to obey the state and the duty to heed one's conscience is afforded us in the Kafr Kassem case. Kafr Kassem is an Arab village in modern Israel. During the Sinai campaign of 1956 the village came under martial law. Some Arab peasants returned from their fields not knowing that martial law had been proclaimed; they were guilty of being in the streets during curfew hours, and the Israeli security police fired at them; forty-three Arab villagers died, and a number were wounded.

The Prime Minister of Israel learned of the incident and ordered those guilty of the shooting to stand trial. The officers argued that they acted under the terms of the declaration of martial law; those who fired the shots argued that they only carried out orders. The Israeli court found the commanding officer, as well as those serving under him, guilty; prison sentences ranging from seven to seventeen years were imposed, and the Arab families were given financial compensation. The

⁴ Louis Ginzberg: *A Commentary on the Palestinian Talmud* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America; 1941), Vol. I, p. xxxiii.

principle established by the court is unprecedented in military history; it established the principle that a soldier is not a robot who may blindly obey an order regardless of how irrational or morally reprehensible. The duty to the state and to its officers is not an ultimate duty; the obedience due to it is not absolute, and it does not supersede the claim of ethical and moral considerations.

Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion, in informing his nation's parliament that the border police would be brought to trial for their action, had this to say: "It is clear that no amount of money can possibly compensate for the loss of human life. I feel it my duty to express our profound concern at the fact that such an act has been possible—an act that strikes a blow at the most sacred foundations of human morality drawn from Israel's Torah."⁵

A number of extreme cases of pressure from the political order on Jewish ethics occurred in the Jewish ghettos under Nazi occupation. The political order fashioned by the Nazis aimed at the total destruction of Jewry. But there were many situations transitional to destruction which challenged the ethical system of the Jew.

Some of the problems posed were only newer incarnations of dilemmas confronted in earlier periods of persecution. The Nazis tried to pervert their victims into collaborators in their crime. They ordered Jews, usually leaders among their people, on pain of death, to select other Jews for slavery or, when the "final solution" was to be applied, for extermination. Some were weak and obeyed the instinct of self-preservation. But some of the most stirring incidents of moral heroism were

⁵ *Middle Eastern Affairs*, Vol. VIII, No. 2 (Feb. 1957), p. 86; Vol. IX, No. 12 (Dec. 1958), p. 405.

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written by those who allowed their action to be guided by the admonition of their ethical tradition.

The Talmud, confronting a time of persecution under the Romans when a parallel dilemma was to be faced, pronounced against compliance. Life was sacred, and one was to defend one's self even by taking the life of an assailant, but one must not take the life of an innocent person merely as a means of self-preservation. The Talmud deals with this as a general problem in ethics as well as in the context of a particular historical situation. The following brief account is a good summation of the rabbinic approach to the subject: "A certain man once came to Raba and said to him, 'The ruler of my village said to me, Kill so-and-so, and if you will not, I will kill you!' He (Raba) replied, 'Let him kill you but you must not kill! What makes you think that your blood is redder than his? Perhaps the blood of that man is redder than yours' " (Yoma 82b).

The ruler of that village may have acted capriciously. The Romans committed much slaughter, but their goal was to subjugate, not to exterminate. The Nazis carried the corruption of the state to its ultimate evil by using its apparatus for the calculated extermination of their victim. The policy of extermination went through several stages. In one stage it took the form of a prohibition of childbirth. A woman entering pregnancy was to be executed. Two problems were presented. Was it morally proper under such circumstances for families to practice birth control? The question was addressed to Rabbi Ephraim Oshery in the Kovno ghetto. Another question addressed to him was by a woman who had become pregnant and weighed the propriety of an abortion. Rabbi Oshery ruled affirmatively in both cases.

The sanction of birth control and abortion in the circumstances cited was an application of well-established principles of Jewish ethics. Procreation is the noblest fulfillment of marriage; it is a universal obligation resting on all men to "be fruitful and multiply," as the Bible phrases it. It is every man's duty to further the purpose of God, who created the world, in the words of Isaiah (45:18), "not to be a waste but that it may be inhabited." Nevertheless, Jewish law permitted the woman to use a contraceptive in order to avoid conception in instances where her health or the health of her children would be jeopardized or where it had been established that children born to her were afflicted with a serious congenital illness, physical or mental (Yevamot 12b; *Shulhan Arukh, Even Ha-Ezer* 5:12; and see commentaries cited in *Otzar Ha-Poskim*).

In his sanction of abortion, too, Rabbi Oshery was guided by precedent. An unborn child is not yet a person, and Jewish law allows a physician in an emergency to destroy the embryo if this be the only means of saving the life of the mother. The Mishnah rules: "If a woman is in hard travail, the child must be cut while it is in the womb and brought out organ by organ since the life of the mother has priority over the life of the child; but if the greater part of it was already born, it may not be touched, since the claim of one life cannot override the claim of another life" (Ohalot 7:6).

A question of unparalleled grimness is included in the responsa of Rabbi Oshery. He was consulted by a Jew in the Kovno ghetto on the moral propriety of suicide. The ghetto was doomed in any case, he argued. Death at the hand of the Nazis would be especially cruel; it was the practice of the Nazis to force the head of the family to witness the death of his wife and children prior to his own execution. The dead

were even denied honorable burial. Suicide, he felt, would be a more merciful end to his existence.

Rabbi Oshery cited the classic teaching of Jewish ethics on the question of suicide; it is forbidden by the admonition in Genesis 9:5: "For your lifeblood will I surely require a reckoning." The customary rites of mourning are omitted in the case of a suicide, and he is buried in a special place in the cemetery as a sign of profound disapproval for his deed. But Rabbi Oshery conceded that existing circumstances mitigated such a deed, citing the case of King Saul, who when he was wounded and saw the tide of battle turned against him, committed suicide by throwing himself on his sword so as not to be caught by the Philistines, who would torture and degrade him. One who committed suicide because of the inability to endure Nazi atrocities was, therefore, to be exempt from the usual tokens of disapproval; he was to be given a normal burial and the rites of mourning were to be observed.

But Rabbi Oshery refused public sanction to suicide. "Certainly," he wrote, "it is forbidden to promulgate a public decision that under present circumstances it is proper for a person to commit suicide. We would then help the wicked persecutors, for they often argue with the Jews why they don't kill themselves. . . . This would be a desecration of the Divine Name, for this would tend to show that the Jews had lost the faith that God would eventually redeem them from the impure and cursed hands of their persecutors. This was precisely the objective of the murderers, to engender despair among the Jews and to extirpate from their hearts every hope for deliverance."

Rabbi Oshery makes the remarkable observation that in the entire ghetto of Kovno, which numbered approximately 50,000 souls, there were only three cases of suicide; the rest

of the ghetto residents "believed with an unwavering faith that God would not abandon His people, but that He would finally halt the destroyer; they all believed in the coming of the messiah and each day they awaited his coming" (*She'elot U-Teshuvot Mi-Ma'amakim* by Rabbi Ephraim Oshery, sections 18, 20, 6).

The other ghettos suffered the same tragic fate, and similar moral dilemmas were confronted and resolved. In the Vilna ghetto, the Nazis appointed a Jewish administrative official, a certain Jacob Gans, through whom they carried out their various measures against the ghetto residents. Gans tried to mitigate the Nazi terror as far as possible, and he himself was eventually executed by the Nazis. One of the demands made on him was to select specified numbers of Jews for deportation and death. The illusory promise made was that by co-operation he would be able to spare the remaining Jews. A delegation of Vilna Rabbis instructed him on the ethical issues at stake. If the Nazis named a particular Jew and charged him with a particular personal offense, then his surrender, under the tragic circumstances prevailing, might be justified as a means of saving the rest of the community. On the other hand, the community had no right to save itself by selecting some of its members for death. They quoted a well-known case in Jewish law as a precedent: "If idolators order a community, 'Surrender one among you that we may slay him, and if not we shall slay you all'—let them all submit to death but they must not surrender one among them to be murdered."⁶ (The Talmudic case cited is summarized by Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, *Hilkhos Yesodot Ha-Torah* 5:5.)

⁶ M. Dvorzetzky: "Ha-Hayim Ha-Datiyyim Be-Getto Vilna," in *Sinai*, Vol. 47, No. 8 (Jerusalem, May 1960), p. 122.

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The rule that one may not save one's life by taking the life of another was understood in the sense that one may not actively take another person's life to save oneself. But what if the other person's loss of life is indirect? This is a grim situation. Certainly we are obligated to do all we can to save him. But what if this is impossible, that our effort to save him is only likely to cause death for both? The Talmud (Bava Metzia 62a) cited the case of two men in the desert, with one of them possessing a canteen of water sufficient to sustain only one person. One scholar, Ben Petura, ruled that both must share the water even though both are sure to die. Rabbi Akiba ruled that the one who possessed the water had the right to drink it and save himself, for one has a prior obligation to one's own life. The Talmud did not resolve the disagreement between the two scholars, although Rabbi Akiba's voice was generally deemed more authoritative in the academy. The case cited, a hypothetical one to be sure, serves to remind us of the tragic dilemmas one must occasionally face in the ethical life.

It is Rabbi Akiba's principle, that one has a prior obligation to one's own life, which was adopted in Jewish law to permit self-defense, even if in the process we must kill the assailant. And this is the basis for the moral sanction to war if waged for a legitimate, defensive purpose. It is of course difficult to decide when war is really defensive. Each nation presents its case from the point of view of its own interests, and the individual tends to be drawn along with the passions of his own nation's cause. But even defensive war is a tragic compromise with ethical principles, especially modern war, with its threat of unprecedented annihilation to fall upon vanquished and victors alike. The primary task on the agenda of mankind is to free the world of the scourge of war, to

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create a structure of international law to resolve the differences that may arise between nations.

The deliberation by which we arrive at ethical decisions is sometimes painfully difficult. It is in such decisions that the best of man is tested, his knowledge of the world, the values by which he lives life, the courage to assume risks in pursuit of what is right. Faith in God will not itself resolve our ethical problems, but it will strengthen us in grappling with them, in the exercise of our own moral responsibilities.

Vast are the demands which the ethical ideal makes on us. It takes fortitude and self-denial to fulfill the demands of the ethical law. But it also takes *knowledge*. The answer to ethical problems cannot be found in a simple formula capable of automatic fulfillment regardless of the circumstances under which men live. Ethical principles are guideposts; they are light shining on our way. But deliberation must still play its part in weighing between alternatives, and deliberation presupposes sound knowledge of relevant facts. Among the duties to which we are committed by the ethical ideal is also this—the duty to be informed, the duty to “be deliberate in judgment,” as the *Ethics of the Fathers* puts it (1:1).

The situations of extreme conflict between the individual's obligation to his own life and the obligation he owes to other persons as an expression of the imperative of love tends to suggest an incompatibility between the two obligations. But the conflict is not intrinsic to the structure of human relations. It arises under special circumstances when the underlying harmony and interrelatedness among people is obscured. And one of the elements which begets the sense of the tragic in all such conflicts is the necessity of dealing harshly with a person whom we must regard as part of us and whom we are called on to love as ourselves. It is like the necessity of being

harsh with ourselves, as we are when, in following a prescribed diet, we deny ourselves food or specially cherished delicacies, or when, to save our lives, we may have to submit to the loss of a bodily organ. Life is the higher good, and in order to save life we may have to surrender many things precious to life.

The assumed incompatibility between people and their interests visualizes the world as an arena of inevitable conflict. But there is no more reason to assume the incompatibility of people than there is to assume an ultimate incompatibility among the various aspects of our own natures which are sometimes in fierce antagonism to each other or among members of a family who too at times compete and deal harshly with each other. In each instance a higher harmony is the goal, to permit the conflicts to be resolved within the framework of unity which transcends the conflict. And this is fully paralleled in the state of human relations. As Rabbi Kook put it: "From the perspective of the great concept of the oneness of existence, there disappears the whole problem of the love of self, which some have made into a source of sin, and others, the foundation of morals. There is only the love of all things, which is in truth an enlightened and ennobled self-love. And the falsified self-love which loves only the tiny spark of the universal flame of life . . . and hates the authentic self, it is only a blindness of the eyes."⁷

We have noted that the ethical life involves self-denial. But in another sense it may also be said to involve self-fulfillment. For the ethical attributes are not only taught by a law external to our natures; they are also written upon the texture of our own beings. It is an expression of the godliness in us,

⁷ Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook: *Orot Ha-Kodesh* (Jerusalem: Agudah Le-Hotzaat Sifre Ha-Rayah Kook; 1938), Vol. II, p. 586.

of the divine image we bear on us, that we are propelled by the subtle pressures of our own natures to shun hostility and bestow love. As the noted psychiatrist, Dr. Smiley Blanton, reminds us: "Each act we perform from motives of love pours strength and health into the stream of life. Hate causes us to perish—sometimes in a series of little deaths, sometimes at once. If we would preserve life in its fullest sense, we must choose the course of love."⁸

This is the paradox of life—the surest way to lose it is to hug it tight and spend it on no one but oneself; the surest way to find it is to spend it freely for the sake of others in deeds of mercy and love. The acts of self-denial in fulfillment of love's imperatives are the highest affirmation of a major dimension of the self and one of the sources of its chiefest joys.

The ethical life fulfills an aspect of our nature, but it also strengthens that aspect of our nature; it refines it and makes it more sensitive. Every good deed cultivates in us the capacity to perform other good deeds. It subtly molds our character and makes it more responsive to ethical issues. Like every other faculty of our nature, our ethical self atrophies with disuse, and it grows sharper, more sensitive, as we continue to cultivate it.

The ethical life is the noblest expression of divine service. For we serve God primarily by promoting the purposes of His creation, rather than by formal exercises of conscious adoration. But the ethical life also deepens our love for God and stirs our yearning to serve Him. For the ethical life transforms the world from a cold, impersonal process, to a personalized drama, intensely meaningful, in which we share. That

⁸ Smiley Blanton: *Love or Perish* (New York: Simon and Schuster; 1956), p. 29.

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on which we bestow love becomes lovable, and the ethically active person sees the world as good. From the love of life, the love of the world, one rises to a greater love, to a love for the Creator who fashioned it.

God is linked to His creation, and we move from one to the other, from the love of God to the love of life and from the love of life to the love of God.



XI



Praise and Anticipation

ONE OF the channels open to man for the release of his emotion is language. When he feels deeply enough he utters words to express his feelings; he exclaims, he cries, he implores. Sometimes, when words alone do not offer sufficient release, he will add various accompanying gestures. He will raise his hand or lower it, he will pound the table to indicate emphasis, he will bow or prostrate himself. Sometimes he will reinforce his words with a deed. Thus a young man after saying "I love you" may present a gift to his beloved. All these are represented in prayer.

There is a wealth of informal prayer on the lips of humanity by which the spirit is nourished. Much of it is never recognized as prayer but it partakes of its essence. The anxieties expressed in times of stress in whatever language a person may muster are often a profound experience of prayer. In times of great fulfillment, a person may mutter no more than "Thank God!" But this is prayer, in its genuine sense, as

the outpouring of a heart craving to express what it feels.

But prayer moves to deeper levels of expression, and it eventually becomes the object of disciplined organization. Prayer is in this respect like music. Stray fragments of melody come to our lips in response to our fluctuating emotions. But we would be musically poor indeed if this were all the music available to us. To convey all its richness, music moves to greater complexity; it becomes organized, formalized, it submits to a rigorous discipline of organized form.

The Hebrew term for prayer is *tefillah*; it derives from the root *palayl*, which means literally to "judge." Thus the word *pelilim*, another derivative of the same root, means in Hebrew "judges." The word *tefillah* as used for prayer suggests therefore an act of judging oneself in the light of God's existence and His providence. The English word "pray" derives from the Latin *precare*, which means to "implore," like the German word for prayer *beten*, which means literally to "beg," both suggesting only one phase of prayer, that of petition. The Hebrew conception of prayer, as expressed in the term *tefillah*, is more general. It expresses all those emotions engendered in us when we see ourselves in the context of a universe created and directed by God toward the realization of beneficent ends, or what we have chosen to call *values*. The characteristic of Jewish prayer, as we shall see, is not petition but adoration.

Prayer is found in all religions, and it is highly diverse in form. A Moslem is called to pray five times daily; a Jew is asked to pray three times daily. A Roman Catholic prays through identification with the priest who intones in Latin. A Quaker prays in silence, in a room bare and simple, to escape from the distractions which flow from words, imagery, and symbolism. There are in each religious tradition prescribed

moments for chanting, singing, bowing. And the formulae of prayer themselves are endless, as endless as the human imagination in coining words to convey the deep feelings of the heart.

Prayer is, however, differentiated in content no less than in form. The differentiation in content reflects the varying conceptions of God entertained in the varying religious traditions. When God is deemed an arbitrary being, capricious in his administration of the world, unconcerned with man's hopes and yearnings, the words spoken to him will reflect terror, and their mood will be cringing and servile. When God is envisioned as a loving Father who dispenses good, regardless of our merit, whose mercy is bestowed on all His children equally, the words we speak to Him will accentuate praise. Their burden will be the sense of privilege in living within the context of His providence, the privilege of conforming our will to His will.

The most common liturgical word by which a Jew addresses God is *barukh*, from which are also derived the terms *barekhu* and *berakhah*. *Barukh* is usually rendered as "blessed be." This reflects the old English of the King James version of the Bible. In old English "bless" has a double meaning, to praise and also to invoke good on, as is conveyed in the present usage of the term "bless." In modern English it becomes inappropriate to speak of man "blessing" God. The term should therefore be rendered as "praised be."

This connotation is also suggested by the etymology of the word *barukh*. It clearly derives from *berekh* which means a "knee"; the act of praising God was accompanied by the bending of the knee, a way of lowering ourselves before God, to acknowledge His supremacy and our subservience to Him.

Barekhu is a summons to prayer; it is an exhortation, calling

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on the assembled congregation to begin prayer. The full call to prayer is *Barekhu et Adonai ha-mevorakh*, "Praise the Lord to whom all praise is due." The response of the congregation is *Barukh Adonai ha-mevorakh le-olam va-ed*, "Praised be the Lord to whom all praise is due forever and ever."

Berakhah is any text of prayer in praise of God.

Prayer usually begins as the improvised creation of an individual, who is moved by personal experience to speak to God. These individual creations of sensitive religious spirits may gain wider acceptance and appeal to other people as channels to express their own emotions. All the great creations of the spirit begin as a private response to some vision that has disclosed itself to a particular soul. But they are appropriated by the rest of humanity and converted into a universal medium, expressing the stirrings of every other human soul. For this is the nature of our shared humanity, that the love, hope, or despair felt by any one person corresponds to analogous emotions felt by *all* persons, and any expression of these emotions, though originating in the particular experience of one individual, can serve to express the emotions of other men.

The creators of the Jewish liturgy drew on the vast treasury of religious poetry which had long flourished in Judaism. The most important source of Jewish prayer was the book of Psalms. Entire chapters and sections of chapters were introduced into the Prayer Book. In the Middle Ages they drew on the works of the great religious poets, Moses ibn Ezra, Solomon ibn Gabirol, Judah Halevi, and a host of others. In our own day some editions of the Prayer Book have included the fruits of modern writers. Especially popular has been the hymn to welcome the Sabbath by Hayyim Nahman Bialik, "Yerushalayim" by Avigdor Ha-Meiri, and various

selections from the writings of Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook. Many of these modern additions are used as supplementary to the formal service, but some will no doubt be absorbed into the main body of the service itself. The creators of the liturgy built a structure with certain themes to cover the many-sidedness of man's life with God. The materials with which they built were as a rule the existing songs of faith which dealt with themes hallowed in Jewish tradition.

On occasion, however, they directed certain individuals to compose prayers for a specified purpose. Thus after the destruction of the Temple the Rabbis who met at Jabneh to reconstruct Jewish life felt the need of a prayer against the "sectarians," who threatened to disrupt Judaism with various sectarian heresies, and they instructed Samuel the Humble to compose such a prayer.

The heart of Jewish prayer is the praise of God. Mortal lips cannot, of course, offer due praise to the Eternal One. Only he who is endowed with a comparable excellence can perceive and assess what is excellent. Man cannot fully know God, and he cannot therefore duly praise Him.

It is a recurring theme in the Jewish liturgy that our words in praise of God are feeble and inept. God is declared in the *Kaddish* to be "beyond the praises and hymns of glory which mortals offer Him throughout the world." Man's effort to praise God is declared to be a presumption. *Nora tehillot*, "it is awesome to speak God's praises," we say in one of our prayers.

The Psalmist glimpsed this mood when he declared (Psalms 65:2), "Unto Thee silence is praise." The noblest praise is indeed the hushed silence that sometimes falls on a man when he contemplates the stupendous works of God, and the wisdom and perfection disclosed by them, and he realizes that

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all this is beyond his comprehension and certainly beyond his characterization.

Silence is sometimes the highest praise. Yet man cannot remain silent, for his heart would burst with too much love and longing. The words spoken in praise of God, moreover, though admittedly inadequate from the point of view of their subject, are helpful as pedagogy to stir those who do not feel God's perfection as a direct experience, to some appreciation of the divine. Indeed, is not every great experience to some extent ineffable, or incapable of being communicated? A burst of melody, the glory of a sunset, the smile of a loved one—these often render us speechless. A mother endlessly reiterates her endearment of her child, but no set of adjectives singly or in combination can express fully what is in her heart. With due allowance for the inadequacy of language, we cannot help speaking of our love for God even as we cannot help trying to communicate any other great experience which has been part of our life.

What are the occasions which elicit our praise of God? There are moments in personal life when we become aware of special benefits of divine providence, and the Jewish liturgy has made provision for a proper expression of thankfulness. On recovery from illness we have a prayer in praise of God who is "the Healer of all flesh." A person who has been delivered from peril is invited to offer thanks to God in these words: "Praised be Thou, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who dost shower Thy blessings upon man, even beyond his merits, and who hast been gracious unto me and hast delivered me from peril." The congregation is asked to respond to this prayer by declaring: "May He who has showered His blessings on you ever be with you and bless you." On attaining any happy milestone in life, a person is

called on to praise God by reciting the *Sheheheyanu*: "Praised be Thou, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who hast kept me in life and sustained me in health and hast privileged me to reach this occasion."

These, and any other improvised prayers inspired by occasions in personal life, are, however, not part of the formal prayer service. In the formal prayer service the individual stands before God not as a private person, but as a citizen of the universe, as a member of his people, as a participant in the rhythm of all existence. His prayer is a response to the tokens of divine providence encountered in the more universal dimensions of his life, as a child of nature, as a sharer in the common adventure of human destiny, as a Jew. He speaks of his own life but he envisions his life in the context of the larger whole of which it is a part.

This is indeed one of the contributions of Jewish prayer—it frees us of egocentricity and conditions us to see ourselves from the perspective of the total drama of existence. The familiar formula by which God is generally invoked in all Jewish prayer is *Barukh Atah Adonai Elohaynu melek ha-olam*, "Praised be Thou, O Lord, Our God, King of the universe." God is a "Thou" who stands in intimately close personalized relation to every "I" who approaches Him, but He is also King of the universe. And the I-and-Thou relationship in which man confronts God in prayer mirrors a parallel confrontation in life, a confrontation which is an incident in the larger life of God's government of the universe.

The Jewish liturgy draws many elements into the structure of a service other than prayer, in the strict sense of the term. One such element which dominates every major service is the reading from Scripture. The Pentateuch is divided into weekly installments which comprise a yearly cycle of readings. These

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weekly readings are called *sidrot*, and each *sidrah* is in turn divided into portions (*parashot*). The full weekly reading of seven *parashot* takes place on the Sabbath, and there are reduced readings, divided into three portions, on Monday and Thursday morning and Saturday afternoon. Special readings are assigned for the morning services on the festivals and fast days. Selections from the prophetic books are also read at the morning services on the Sabbath and festivals, as supplements to the final portion (*parashah*) read from the Pentateuch. The final Pentateuchal portion is called *maftir*, and the prophetic supplement is called *haftarah*.

Another element outside of prayer which is structured into each morning and evening service is the *Shema*, which prescribes the basic affirmations of Judaism: the unity of God, the duty to love Him, to keep the discipline of His commandments, the duty to create reminders of His presence on the hand and on the head, on the doorposts of the house and on our garments. The recitation of the *Shema* was the pivot of the service in the days of the Temple, and so it remains. It is around the *Shema* that there developed the first major rubric of prayer, two prayers preceding the *Shema* and two following it in the evening service, two prayers preceding and one following in the morning service. The basic theme in this rubric of prayer is the praise of God.

The first prayer preceding the *Shema* praises God as the Author of nature. Especially in the evening service is this theme expounded. Our prayer cites the order of nature, as reflected in the panorama of stars moving majestically in their courses in the sky, the alternation of the seasons each year, and the boundary of time which separates yet binds together the recurring cycle of day and night. In the constancy and regularity with which these proceed is revealed the wis-

dom and grandeur of the Creator, and humbly we acknowledge God's work by declaring to Him our praise. This prayer begins with *Barukh Atah Adonai Elohaynu melekh ha-olam*, "Praised be Thou, O Lord, our God, King of the universe," and it closes with *Barukh Atah Adonai ha-ma'ariv aravim*, "Praised be Thou, O Lord, who bringest on the evening twilight."

The same theme is expressed in the first prayer preceding the Shema in the morning service, but the survey of nature is more comprehensive. It sings of the grandeur of the universe as revealed by the stars and planets that abide in the realms of cosmic space. It sings of the bounty bestowed on the earth and those who live on it by the radiance of sun and stars. It sings of the wonder of renewal which occurs each day continually in the work of creation. It cites the quest to preserve life which is written into the nature of things, the fierce resistance to destructive forces exhibited by every organism, the forces of restoration and healing which are operative in every life. Its climax takes us back to light as the fundamental expression of divine creative energy: "Praised be Thou, O Lord, Creator of the luminous bodies."

The second prayer, in the evening and morning service, introducing the *Shema*, praises God as Lawgiver. It is characteristic of the endearment felt in Judaism for the Torah, its laws and commandments, that this prayer is called "Love." Its theme is God as our Lover. He is our Lover because He gave us what we deem our choicest possession, the Torah. Without the Torah, man's world would be a darkness thicker than the darkness that would prevail without sun and stars shining on it. The Torah is another light shining on our way, showing us direction and purpose. And because God in His wisdom saw fit to reveal His Torah to Israel, making the

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Jewish people uniquely sensitive to religious truth, and therefore charged with a holy mission to be light bearers for all mankind, our prayer praises God for the singular love shown to the people of Israel.

There is a human side to the Torah in the role played by the men who spoke and wrote its words, but the visions which inspired them did not originate in themselves. The ultimate source of those visions and of the passion to give them concrete embodiment in words, derived from the Fountain whence all life and light emanates, God, who is the source and goal and ground of all existence.

The affirmation of God's love for Israel is not of course meant to negate His love for other people. All men who become aware of their unique endowments owe a like acknowledgment to God as the source of their blessings. For all great creative achievements are man's response to a divine stimulus, and the unique creations which characterize particular peoples are a token of God's special love for them.

This prayer concludes as does every prayer with a brief summation. In the evening service it is: "Praised be Thou, O Lord, who lovest Thy people Israel." In the morning service the wording is "Praised be Thou, O Lord, who hast chosen Thy people Israel in love."

The prayer which follows the *Shema* praises God as the Redeemer. The memory of the exodus from Egypt is invoked, and it is seen as a clue to God's work in history. Long has been the line of tyrants who harassed Israel, and were it not for God's providential help we would surely have perished from the face of the earth.

"Thou," we declare, turning to God, "hast been the help of our fathers from of old, a Protector and Deliverer to their children in every generation. Thou dost ever humble the

proud and raise up the lowly. Thou freest those who are in captivity and deliverest the oppressed. Thou helpest the needy and answerest Thy people, when they cry unto Thee. Praises unto Thee, exalted Lord, ever praised be Thou."

These words occur in the version of this prayer which is recited in the morning service; there is a slight variation in text in the version of this prayer as found in the evening service. Both versions conclude with the same formula: "Praised be Thou, O Lord, Redeemer of Israel."

The affirmation of God as Redeemer of Israel does not negate His comparable role in the lives of other people. The prophets reminded their people of this. Said Amos (9:7): "Are you not as the children of the Ethiopians unto Me, O children of Israel? said the Lord. Have I not brought up Israel out of the land of Egypt, and the Philistines from Caphtor and Aram from Kir?"

God is the Power who stirs all creatures to yearn for freedom and to resist the conditions that thwart their autonomy. God is the Redeemer of all life, on the personal as on the group level, and we acknowledge His presence in every surge toward free development, in every assertion of identity and autonomy. The Jewish liturgy discerns this in the career of the Jewish people, and it becomes a familiar theme in the language of praise which a Jew addresses to God.

In the evening service, the *Shema* is followed by a second prayer, *Hashkivaynu*, which asks for a night of peace. But here we are involved in petitionary prayer, which we shall deal with later on.

The *Shema* with its rubric of prayers is followed by another great landmark in the service, the *Amidah*. This is sometimes called *Shemoneh Esray*, or "Eighteen," because its most common form consisted originally of eighteen benedictions

or prayers. But this is not too happy a designation because soon after adoption, the eighteen became nineteen; the eighteen or nineteen, moreover, were only for weekday recitation. On the Sabbath and festivals the number was changed. Petitionary prayers, reflecting our deficiency, were deemed unsuitable for days when we are to be especially conscious of God's bounty and of the blessings bestowed on us. A number of petitionary prayers were omitted and replaced by others which express gratitude for the Sabbath and the festivals. The term *Amidah* means literally "standing," and this is perhaps the more fitting designation, for this body of prayers, of whatever number, is always recited standing.

The first three prayers of the *Amidah* are praises of God. The first invokes His protecting love shown Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and their children after them, and it concludes by praising Him as "Shield of Abraham." The second invokes God's mercy as revealed in the resurrection of life after apparent death. Prayers for rain and dew are integrated with this prayer, which clearly indicates that the reference is to rebirth in nature which occurs each spring. The prayer has of course wider reference, and it directs itself especially to the life of man. The support for the fallen, the healing of the sick, the release of those in captivity are seen as expressions of this same mercy of God working to rescue life from the clutches of death. The prayer reaches its climax in the affirmation that those who "sleep in the dust" will not be abandoned, for there is life eternal in which a mortal man may share.

The formula closing this prayer praises God as *mehayay ha-maytim*, literally, "who causeth the dead to live." How are we to understand this? Does this refer to a physical resurrection at some future time? But it certainly cannot be restricted

to this meaning, for *mehayay* is a present tense. It refers to an ongoing phenomenon, which is an abiding characteristic of life, an abiding expression of God's mercy with His creatures. Does it refer to the chain of heredity in which the core of life is preserved and transmitted to ever-newer generations? Does it refer to the survival of the spirit, the soul? Is it a reference to the survival of value, the level of perfection embodied in a creature's life and transmitted to posterity by the law of spiritual heredity? Is it a reference to the noble life of a righteous man, which, like the song played on the violin, survives the instrument on which it is played?

Judaism did not dogmatize about the details of concepts which can be envisioned only in their general, conceptual state. The fact that life is shot through with aspects of eternity was well described by the noted American philosopher A. N. Whitehead when he said, "Every factor in the universe has two aspects for an abstraction of thought. The factor can be considered on its temporal side in the world of change and on its immortal side in the world of value."¹ The light of eternity shines through amidst the darkness of our mortal existence. This frame of clay is suffused with a "divine" element which enables us to triumph over death. Conscious that with our mortal feet we yet walk in eternity we declare to the Creator, *Barukh Atah Adonai mehayay ha-maytim*, "Praised be Thou, O Lord, who causest the dead to live."

The third in the rubric of prayers that comprises the *Amidah* praises God for His holiness. We have noted that God's holiness is a reference to His transcendence and perfection—to those attributes which distinguish Him from all other beings. It is in a sense the climax of all praises. It acknowledges that

¹ *The Philosophy of A. N. Whitehead*, P. A. Schilpp (ed.) (Evanston and Chicago: Northwestern University; 1941), p. 693.

the offerings of our lips are feeble indeed as far as characterizing God, that after all we have said it is important to remember that He is wholly other than what we know or imagine, that He is the Holy One.

Every service closes with *Alaynu Le-Shabayah*, which praises God for the privilege of being part of the Jewish household of faith, which has spared us from the idolatry and superstition which permeate pagan cultures. It closes with the hope that the light of Judaism will vanquish superstition and idolatry, that the wicked of the earth will be drawn to penitence and all mankind will acknowledge God as its supreme Sovereign.

We have referred to the morning and evening service. There is also an afternoon service which consists principally of the *Amidah* and Psalm 145 as an introduction prescribed for weekdays. On the Sabbath and festivals one more reading is added before the *Amidah*, *U-Va Le-Tziyon Go'ayl*, affirming the binding character of the covenant between God and Israel.

We have cited only some elements in the structure of the Jewish liturgy. The entire structure of the liturgy is more elaborate, and we cannot enter upon a detailed examination of it. Suffice it to say that in addition to the *Shema* with its rubric of prayers, the *Amidah*, and *Alaynu Le-Shabayah*, there is a rich treasury of readings, drawn mostly from the book of Psalms, which is added to each service. A minimum of these additions is applied to the daily service, the maximum to the service on the Sabbath and festivals. In this treasury of readings are included the great psalms in appreciation of nature, the psalms idealizing the Torah, the epic poems describing Israel's escape from Egyptian bondage, the psalms describing the joy of reconciliation with God after estrangement due to

sin. The theme of God's praise is the burden of all these supplementary readings.

Stepping outside the structure of the formal service the Jewish liturgy provides a number of short prayers in praise of God, to be recited at each occasion when we experience a manifestation of God's presence. These occasions include eating of various foods, the experience of beholding the beauties of nature, seeing trees in blossoms, hearing thunder, seeing a flash of lightning, meeting a man wise in worldly knowledge or a sage distinguished in the knowledge of the Torah.

There is another group of short prayers in praise of God that at one time belonged to the category of occasional prayers but have since been added to the introductory section of the morning service. These prayers are a response to the act of waking in the morning. Among the phenomena for which God is praised is the instinct of the rooster enabling him to distinguish between day and night, the ability to see again the splendor of the world, to stir again, to stand erect, to find firm ground under our feet, to be relieved of weariness and to resume once more a new day of work and service.

There is still another aspect to Jewish prayer. It is the aspect of petition. In what sense does man petition God? If God is what we envision of Him, is it really necessary for us to plead for His help? Does He not know what our needs are, even better than we do ourselves? If He is our loving Father who knows our needs, will He not help us without our bringing petitions to Him? Is not life, moreover, governed by laws ordained by God, and do we expect God to cancel the regularities of the laws governing life to heed our entreaty?

In the long annals of Jewish tradition one finds many diverse ideas on all aspects of the religious life. There have undoubtedly been some Jewish teachers who took petitionary prayer

as an attempt to induce God to alter life's course in our favor. But those who reflected on the subject are singularly free of this conception of petitionary prayer. The Talmud (Mishnah Berakhot 9:3) acknowledges that it is vain to pray for what is clearly impossible. Once a woman is pregnant it is vain to pray that the child she bears be either male or female, for facts are facts and they cannot be canceled out by the effect of prayer. Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook generalized:² "Prayer does not seek to effect any change in God who is the source of all that is eternal and beyond change. It seeks rather to raise the soul toward divine heights."

A deeper study of what we call petitionary prayer will reveal that it does not differ substantially from prayer of praise. God loves all His children, and He is ready to bestow good on them graciously, freely; they do not need to remind Him, nor to beg Him. The problem of man however is that he is not always ready to accept what the Lord is eager to bestow. The eagerness to accept makes the gift more efficacious.

We condition ourselves to be receptive to God's gifts, in part, through prayer of praise. But how can we attune ourselves to accept His gifts *before* they are bestowed? We do so by anticipation. And petitionary prayer is really prayer of anticipation. It is prayer offered when facing the zone of life before divine providence has asserted itself, before God has acted. It is prayer offered when facing life's unknown future. We know that God will act, but through our prayer, in this instance phrased in the future tense, we express anticipation of what His providential ordering of life will yield.

It is for this reason that every petitionary prayer is concluded in the present rather than the future tense. Thus we pray for knowledge, in the future tense, but the conclusion is

² *Olat Rayah*, Introduction, p. 14.

Barukh Atah Adonai honayn ha-da'at, "Praised be Thou, O Lord, who dost bestow knowledge." It is not "who wilt bestow knowledge" but "who dost bestow knowledge." God is the source of knowledge which is made available to man always, but man is sometimes unwilling to receive it. Anticipatory prayer makes us more receptive. The conclusion of both forms of prayer, that of praise and that of anticipation, is identical; it is couched in a grammatical form, which indicates that both phases of prayer are a response to the ever-ongoing manifestation of God's providence. It is a statement of praise in both instances, inspired by the reassurance that God is the unfailing source of every good we seek for our lives.

Anticipatory prayer voices a person's needs. It is necessary to distinguish needs from another term with which it is often confused, wants. We want many things which we really do not need, and we often need desperately certain things which we do not want. People need wisdom, but they often prefer to languish in their foolish ways and resist the prodding to change. A man often wants power and wealth more than anything else in the world, whereas he really needs the joy of living in a loving relationship with his dear ones, to pursue justice and mercy, and to walk humbly with his God.

We know human needs only in the light of a larger understanding of man's nature and destiny. And one of the great contributions of the Jewish liturgy is to guide a man in defining his needs. The *Amidah* voices our basic needs. They are: knowledge; reconciliation with God; forgiveness of sin; redemption from oppression; healing; a bountiful harvest; the restoration of the dispersed of the Jewish people in the Holy Land; righteous judges and counselors; an end to arrogant empire; the vindication of those who trust in God; the rebirth

of Jerusalem to her ancient glory; the Messianic age of universal deliverance; God's acceptance of our prayer; the restoration of the Temple in Zion as a central sanctuary of the faith of Israel; the renewal of Zion as a center of God's presence; the privilege of praising God; and climaxing all these, peace. In addition to these there are various other petitionary prayers directed to personal needs which are all part of the regular services and still others designed for recitation on special occasions.

God does not always meet our anticipations. He may have other plans for us. We may want more life, for example, and He may have decreed that our end has come. Given a conflict between what we think we need and want and God's purpose, it is for us to bow humbly to God's will. It is in this spirit, for instance, that we pray in a time of critical illness: "O my God and God of my fathers, I know that Thou alone mayest determine whether I am to be renewed in life. O do Thou grant me a complete healing. Yet if my final end has come I acknowledge Thy judgment. May I be forgiven for any misdeeds before Thee which I have committed in my life, for there is no man so righteous that he is without sin. Bestow upon me the peace which is the portion of the righteous. O God, be with my loved ones whose souls are bound up with mine. Into Thy hand I entrust my spirit. Thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth."

Prayer is not intended to eclipse a human role in the shaping of life. Man and God are conceived in Judaism as partners in the work of creation. God's providence is available to aid man's quest for life, but man must play an active role in the pursuit of this quest. The Rabbis make this clear, for example, in their comment on the opening verse of the twenty-third Psalm. The Psalmist expressed his trust in God's providence

by declaring, "The Lord is my shepherd." In analyzing this characterization of God the Rabbis were troubled by the thought that the analogy might be taken literally, that man may remain passive, and depend entirely on God to sustain him. To disabuse us of this notion they cited Deuteronomy 2:7, "For the Lord will bless you in all the work of your hands." Rabbi Jacob drew the inference from this verse that "if man worked he would be blessed but he would not be blessed if he did not work" (*Midrash Tehillim* on Psalms 23:1). Some of our prayers go unanswered because we expect God to do our work as well as His own. God's readiness to heed our prayer does not relieve us of responsibility to work toward the realization of our goals.

Prayer itself, especially petitionary or—as we have chosen to call it—anticipatory prayer, is a form of cooperation with God to create the conditions which will enable man to benefit from God's providence. Anticipatory prayer is man's going forward to receive God's blessing. It is the opening of our faculties to God, the sending forth of all our receptive powers to take what the Lord has available to give us.

This entire process may well be illustrated by the phenomenon of healing. The restorative capacities of a living organism, and the availability within the body and outside it of elements potent to check disease and restore health, are all well-known. They constitute an illustration of God functioning as the "Healer of all flesh." Man must, of course, cooperate in this process, and the physician plays an impressive role as cohealer with God. But the patient himself also plays a part. His receptivity to the ministry of healing will prove a contribution to its efficacy. Anticipatory prayer enhances our receptivity to the divine influences which emanate from God's unfailing love. Such prayer attunes us more fully to God, per-

mitting the bounty of His grace to flow more freely into our lives.

We have indicated earlier that some form of action often accompanies the verbal expression of emotion. Prayer frequently exhibits this tendency—it is reinforced by action. The screening of one's eyes while reciting the *Shema* is a good illustration of this. As an aid to concentration a gesture was evolved to shut out the outer world while proclaiming our allegiance to God. The most significant action accompanying prayer was the offering of sacrifices.

There is a low as well as a high level in the meanings attached to all religious institutions. The low meaning of sacrifice was the notion, current in paganism, that the god could be benefited by the sacrifice and that the sacrifice could effect a mystic union with the deity and thus win special benefits for the one offering it. The Biblical view, as Yehezkel Kaufmann has shown,³ has clearly transcended all this. The sacrifice, as conceived in the Bible, is only a token of man's submission to God and of obedience to His will; it is a token of honor and reverence, and this is its sole efficacy. Indeed the earliest view of sacrifices called for the offering of human victims. The story of the Binding of Isaac marks the turning point in this institution. Abraham's commitment to God is a total commitment, but a heavenly voice stayed his hand, and Isaac was spared, to serve God in life rather than in death.

The role of sacrifices as reinforcing prayer but possessing no efficacy in themselves to win God's grace is clearly shown by the designation of the Temple as a House of Prayer. Isaiah (56:7) envisions that all nations will some day bring their offerings to the Temple in Zion, for the Temple will become

³ Yehezkel Kaufmann: *The Religion of Israel* (trans. Moshe Greenberg) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), p. 112.

"A House of Prayer for all peoples." The Temple is never called "A House of Sacrifices." It is a House of Prayer, and the offering of sacrifices was an action symbol accompanying the offering of prayer, which constituted the essence of the service.

The slaughter of animals on the altar was regarded by Maimonides as a concession to religious habit. At the time of Israelite beginnings, he explains, the offering of sacrifices was universally practiced, and the Biblical legislator retained it in a purified conception, to be sure, as part of the rites which he instituted for the faith of Judaism. But Maimonides held prayer in itself superior as a means of divine service.

When the Temple in Jerusalem was destroyed, the cult of sacrifices fell into the discard, but the essence of the service which had grown around it survived in other forms of worship which had flourished at the same time. The significance of each type of offering was transmuted into words, into melodies, and into certain dramatic enactments. The most graphic illustration of the latter is the *Avodah* Service on the Day of Atonement.

The three daily services in Judaism are the equivalent of a ritual that grew up as part of the cult of sacrifices. The morning (*Shaharit*) and afternoon (*Minhah*) services are equivalent to the *Tamid* Temple offerings each morning and evening, in gratitude for God's continued and ever-recurring blessings. The evening (*Ma'ariv*) service substituted for the nightly Temple ritual, which centered in the burning of the sacrificial portions set aside from each day's offerings. The supplementary service (*Musaf*) of each Sabbath and festival is equivalent to the supplementary offerings that once were brought in the Temple in Jerusalem on Sabbaths and festivals.

The destruction of the Temple was looked upon as a great

calamity in Judaism. But the Rabbis did not regard the offering of sacrifices as an indispensable act of worship. Thus Rabbah Johanan ben Zakkai consoled his people, after the fall of the Second Temple, with the citation from the prophet Hosea (6:6), who had declared in the name of God: "I desire mercy and not sacrifice, and the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings." Rabbi Elazar declared explicitly in Berakhot 32b: "Prayer is more vital than the offering of sacrifices."

It is interesting that the same event which tended to free Jewish worship from the offering of sacrifices served to re-instate it with even greater potency in Christianity. The destruction of the Temple was interpreted by the early Christians as a mark of God's rejection of the Jewish people for having refused to believe in Jesus as the messiah. The accentuation of the importance of sacrifices tended to make more grave the catastrophe which had befallen Jewry, and Christians therefore stressed the importance of sacrifices and the loss sustained through their passing. And what substitute did Christianity have for the loss of the Temple sacrifices? It was the figure of the crucified Jesus. Since the crucifixion of Jesus occurred within the same period as the fall of the Temple, Christian dogmatists gradually developed the conception that Jesus was the new and the more perfect sacrifice available to win God's grace. This interpretation finds its most radical expression in the Catholic Mass, which is centered in the re-enactment of the sacrifice of Jesus. The priest offers up the body and blood of Jesus, miraculously transformed from the wafer and the wine, and this sacrifice is repeated daily, as the one and only channel through which men can win God's grace. As Bishop Fulton J. Sheen explains it: "All the sacrifices of bullocks, and goats, and sheep, and particularly the

sacrifice of the paschal lamb, found their completion in the cross. . . . The very fact that all sacrifices practically ceased after the sacrifice of Calvary, meant that Calvary was the perfection and fulfillment of *all* sacrifice. . . .”⁴ Bishop Sheen’s interpretation is a relapse to a primitive conception of sacrifices. It is even more offensive from a Jewish point of view than human sacrifice, for Jesus is conceived as a man-God (a notion in itself deeply offensive from the perspective of the belief in One God), and his death as a sacrifice is here conceived as a necessity to win salvation for mankind.

The structure of the Jewish liturgy is wide in scope, and it has served as a potent force in educating Jews toward the love of God. But the institutionalization of worship has its own perils. It makes prayer a formal obligation, to be exercised in a prescribed manner, losing some of the spontaneity which is the heart of worship. Jewish teachers were very much concerned with this. They spoke of the need of *kavanah*, or concentration, in prayer. They asked for inner devotion and comprehension. They sanctioned praying in the vernacular if the person did not understand the Hebrew. They sanctioned various abbreviations of the service where one found himself under pressure and unable to recite the full service.

The institutionalization of worship is meant to be an aid to man who seeks a way to commune with God and who knows that he cannot chart the way himself. But in principle the spirit remains free, and we can extend or abbreviate our prayers as circumstances require it. In a time of extremity a person was asked to recite but a single *berakhah* or benediction. The text of this *berakhah* is recorded by Maimonides as follows: “Manifold are the needs of Thy people Israel, and scant their

⁴ Bishop Fulton J. Sheen: *This is the Mass* (New York: Hawthorn Books, Inc.; 1958), pp. 11f.

knowledge. May it be Thy will, O Lord our God, to grant each one his due sustenance, and each creature in accordance with its need, and mayest Thou perform whatever seems good to Thee. Praised be Thou, O Lord, who heedest prayer" (*Mishneh Torah, Hilkhot Tefillah* 4:19).

The devotion which Jewish tradition sought in prayer was twofold. It was a demand for attentiveness to the meaning of each individual prayer, and it was also a demand for concentration on the over-all objective to which all prayer is directed, to overcome the barrier that separates us from God, to achieve a state of communion with our Maker.

Rabbi Kook spoke of the twofold concentration involved in prayer in these words: ⁵ "There is a concentration on particularity, a concentration on the meaning of words and individual themes of each prayer, and there is a more general concentration, which consists in the heart's dwelling on the greatness of the Lord, praised be He. . . . And by the mind's dwelling on the grandeur of the Lord, the soul is exalted, and in turn exalts prayer to its ultimate depth, and this itself becomes conducive to the acceptance of prayer."

It is in the universal dimension of prayer that praise and anticipation converge. For both forms of prayer serve an identical over-all function. They strengthen our sense of dependence on God, our awareness of His providence, and our reassurance of His love. And these in turn deepen our love for Him. Thus the cycle is completed. The love for God inspires prayer, and prayer in turn inspires the love for God.

⁵ Rabbi Kook: *Olat Rayah*, Introduction, p. 28.



XII



Rites and Values

JUDAISM is more than a body of doctrines; it is also a way of life. And prominent in the Jewish way of life is a variety of action symbols, a calendar of festivals, rites that seek to regulate the ebb and flow of personal life, ceremonies to be enacted in the home and in the synagogue.

What is the purpose of these action symbols? What do they have to contribute to modern man?

We may look upon these action symbols as an educational device, to train the mind and to train the heart toward the acceptance of those values which Judaism envisioned as basic to the spiritual life.

The actions of everyday life forge a pattern of habit that holds man a prisoner to it. Charlie Chaplin's pathetic version of modern man in his moving film *Modern Times* showed him as a worker tending a machine. His work necessitated certain bodily motions, and these became so habitual that he auto-

matically continued to go through the motions even when he was no longer at the machine. A man living in the world tends to become a prisoner of the world, his world of thought and action governed by the familiar. How can we break the chains of time and habit to confront man with the world of values, which he needs in order to judge his world of practical affairs? How can we create islands of freedom for his imagination to roam, to reflect? We do not want to withdraw man from the world of practical affairs. The monastic ideal is not a Jewish ideal. It is wrong for man to be lost to the world as it is for him to be lost to God. He must live in both worlds, to be a citizen of the world of practical things and its vicissitudes and also to create another domain for himself where he will be able to function as a citizen of another order, as a citizen of the Kingdom of the Eternal.

Jewish tradition coped with this problem by introducing another dimension into the world of common experience. It created certain behavior patterns in which the Eternal broke into the immediate and forced a man to live in both worlds simultaneously. The earliest institution for the release of man from bondage to the routine of practical things is the Sabbath. The Sabbath has been extolled for a variety of contributions to human life. It provides rest for the body from the arduous labors of the week. In the time of its institution, it was a novel and revolutionary idea, to call for rest not only on behalf of the master but also of the slave, to proclaim that a cessation of exertion one day each week is a man's right as a creature of God, that its denial would be an invasion of his dignity as a person. The Romans, who knew that rest was the right of the master while the slave and the lower classes generally were like a piece of machinery whose sole function was to produce, could not understand the Jewish Sabbath. Their only explana-

tion was that the Jews were lazy and therefore sought the periodic interruption of their tasks.

A day of rest, indeed two days of rest, have become, with the advance of the labor union and the welfare state, a recognized right of the laboring man in most societies. But the earliest triumph for this principle was the Jewish Sabbath. It is here that the slow march of man's emancipation from being a tool for other men had its beginning, and from this beginning it has marched toward ever-widening vistas of human dignity and freedom.

The Sabbath has been hailed as a contribution to mental health. In its fullest development the Sabbath liberates not only the body, but the mind as well, from the pressures of the world. It asks man not only to cease the exertions of his hands, but also his mental exertions. Thoughts of business, anxieties about business, are deemed inconsistent with the release demanded by the Sabbath. Indeed Jewish law, to create the setting for the total self-emancipation from the business world, forbade handling money on this day or the tools used in one's weekday occupation. It forbade making fire because fire is the principal source of energy for working upon the world. It forbade travel, asking a person to spend this day in family fellowship within the environs of his home and in the pleasures normally neglected, in study, worship, and friendly visitations with neighbors and friends.

Jewish law was mindful of the exigencies of life and, under circumstances of emergency, these restrictions were lifted. The doctor healing the sick, the teacher expounding the Torah, the officer protecting the security of the state—these were exempt from the rigor of Sabbath restrictions, for the Sabbath was a means of enhancing life, and it could not take precedence over the saving of life. But these exemptions and

others sanctioned by ancient and modern teachers of Judaism only serve to emphasize the norm, in which the Sabbath was invoked to render its greatest service, not by adapting itself to life, but by being a brake on it.

Modern man, wound up in his routine, needs especially this kind of a Sabbath, to help him unwind. His typical diversion, in America, is to get into his car and run. On weekends and legal holidays there is an increase in the number of traffic accidents, rather than in the utilization of the leisure gained for reflection, study, spiritual self-confrontation. The Jewish Sabbath is rigorous in its interruption of life, but it only interrupts one kind of life to create freedom for another kind of life.

The highest contribution of the Sabbath is in what it speaks to the human soul. It is a reminder of God as Creator of the universe. We know that creation in its fullest unfolding involved a time proven longer than a week as counted by a mortal's sense of time. The Biblical story of creation aims, however, in another direction. It divides time, as man reckons it, into two stages. One is the time of *becoming*, when things are made, when the world submits to the creative shaping of the divine order imposing itself on it; it is the time when we face the zone of the unfinished, the imperfect, waiting for the next step in the conquest of chaos by harmony, in the banishment of darkness by light breaking in on it. The second stage of time is the zone where God's glory shines with the splendor of His design in fulfillment. And each week is divided into these two time zones, the one to remind us of the work that needs to be done, the other, the Sabbath, to contemplate God's perfection which is discernible in all things He has made. The Sabbath celebrates God's work as Creator. It opens our hearts to the vision of the world as the theater of

God's creative endeavors. And it sensitizes us to the knowledge of our own privilege as participants in the stupendous drama of God's creative work unfolding itself in the world.

The Jewish Sabbath has little in common with the Christian Sabbath. Transferred to the first day of the week instead of the seventh, as Biblically ordained, the Christian Sabbath celebrates not God's work as Creator, but the resurrection of Jesus, which, according to Christian tradition, occurred on a Sunday. Christianity is, in some respects, an offshoot of Judaism, but deviating from Judaism by its trend to otherworldliness. This is illustrated by the transfer of the Sabbath to Sunday and its change of character. Christianity was not primarily interested in the world to celebrate its creation. It centered its emphasis on Jesus as the sole revelation of God's redemptive love, and its Sabbath, like all its festivals, celebrate incidents in the life, death, and resurrection of its man-God, Jesus.

The other festivals of the Jewish calendar interrupt life to proclaim other aspects of God's role in the world. They all contribute to bodily and mental rest, for they carry the usual restrictions of the Sabbath, except in permitting the preparation of food. But they make their contribution as reminders of God's providence. They carry associations from past and present, which have their objective to recharge us with the awareness of God's manifold work in nature and in history, that we know Him, love Him, and fear Him.

We have a group of festivals called *Shalosh Regalim*, the three Pilgrimage festivals; they are Passover, or *Pesah*, the Feast of Weeks, or *Shavuot*, and Tabernacles, or *Sukkot*. They are called *Regalim*, or Pilgrimage festivals, because it was the practice during these festivals in ancient times to go as pilgrims to the Holy Temple in Jerusalem. The word

regel means "foot," and the pilgrimage was usually a journey on foot; hence the name *Regalim* for pilgrimage festivals.

These festivals have an agricultural as well as a historical significance. The conditions reflected are of course the agricultural setting of ancient Palestine. Passover marked the season of the barley harvest, the Feast of Weeks, that of the wheat harvest, and the Feast of Tabernacles, that of the vintage. The specific forms by which the agricultural aspect of these festivals was expressed stressed the realization that God is the source of our bounty. The farmer tills the soil, he cultivates the lands, he plants, hoes, weeds, harvests, but he did not endow the earth with its miraculous power to take the seed into its womb and transform it, to yield new life. He did not fashion the fecundity of the seed, nor did he stuff the sun with energy and make it pour its bounty upon the earth, nor fashion the rain drops with their remarkable power to nourish life and awaken growth. Nor did he create the economy of existence whereby all things join together in a chain of dependence, each yielding the best of itself, to make possible the fulfillments of his own life. A farmer is jealous for his own earth, but these festivals remind us that the earth is also the Lord's and the fullness thereof.

The commemoration for each of these festivals included offerings of the first fruits in the Temple, a touching prayer of thanksgiving recited by the pilgrim in acknowledgment of God's blessings, songs by the chorus of Levites, with various responses by the assembly of worshippers. The Sukkot festival was especially stirring. There was the procession about the altar, the pilgrims bearing the *etrog*, the "fruit of goodly trees," as it was called, and the *lulav*, the palm branch with attached branches of myrtle and willow leaves. There was the colorful ceremony of the water libation on the altar at

the conclusion of the festival. And there was the rite of dwelling in a "sukkah," or a booth, rather than in one's normal home throughout this festival.

The detachment of the Jew, outside of modern Israel, from the soil, has tended to obscure the agricultural aspect of these festivals. This aspect of the festivals has also suffered decline because much of it centered in the Temple offerings, which have ceased, since the destruction of the Temple in the first century of the Common Era. But Sukkot has retained the flavor of the soil, the synagogue has taken the place of the Temple for the procession with *lulav* and *etrog*. This rite is also performed at home by taking in hand these elements and shaking them ceremoniously. The *sukkah* is built in many Jewish homes, and it is always constructed by the synagogue, where the worshippers gather and partake of some food and feast their eyes on many beautiful things grown by the earth.

It is especially modern man, urbanized, alienated from nature, surrounded continually by the things his hands and his machines have made, who is served profoundly by these rites in being reminded of God as the Author of nature, our Provider, our Sustainer, by whose goodness we live and have our being.

The historical aspect of these festivals is better-known. Each of them represents an event which dramatized God's providence with singular clarity. These events are re-created symbolically; they are lifted from the past and re-enacted. The purpose of their re-enactment is not to invite us to relive the past. The past is rather brought forward to be seen as a clue to the present and the future. Passover re-enacts the exodus from Egypt. The *Seder* at home is a retelling in action, to the accompaniment of a continuous commentary, of the *Haggadah*, of the events of the Exodus. The bitter herbs sim-

ulate the bitter lot of the Israelites in Egypt; the salt water, the tears they shed during the years of suffering in slavery; the *haroset* made of ground nuts and cinnamon simulates the mortar which the Israelites used while they laid bricks to build Pharaoh's cities.

There are also symbols of hope: the unleavened bread, a reminder of the hurried departure from Egypt; the egg, a symbol of new life; and the green vegetable, a symbol of rebirth in nature, of spring, which parallels the spring of history, when the oppressed rise from their lethargy and suffering to the hope of a new life. And there are the four cups of wine, to represent the four distinct announcements of freedom the Bible records in the story of the Exodus. The open door for Elijah, who in Jewish folklore will announce the redeemer of the future, carries the drama to its climax and gives it its timeless quality. In times of persecution and homelessness, it assured the Jewish people of eventual redemption. The exile endured was seen as but another link in the chain of suffering that began in Egypt, while the redemption of the future was envisioned as the final step in the march toward freedom which began with the Exodus.

Shavuot, the Feast of Weeks, recalls the events at Sinai and reminds us that God has revealed His will to man through the Torah. The events of the revelation at Sinai are recalled, the Ten Commandments are read solemnly in the synagogue to a standing and hushed congregation. Once again the past is brought forward, to take its place beside the present as one unbroken whole. The routine of living by the law of the market place is broken with the announcement that life is governed by a higher law. It is this higher law which differentiates man from the brute, and the possession of this higher law marks our privilege and our distinction. Shavuot reminds

us of this privilege and it calls upon us to see in it a token of God's love. It also reminds us of our responsibility to study, teach, and practice what is set forth in the Torah, to have ears and hearts open to the ongoing revelation of God's truth, to continue the work of leading men out of falsehood to truth, out of the darkness of superstition and idolatry toward the light of the knowledge of God and His law of righteousness and love.

The historical aspect of the Sukkot festival is alluded to briefly in the Bible. It is to serve as a reminder of God's providential love shown our forefathers during the time of their wanderings in the desert, on their way to the Promised Land. As Scripture puts it (Leviticus 23:42-43): "Ye shall dwell in booths seven days, that your generations may know that I caused the children of Israel to dwell in booths, when I brought them out of the land of Egypt; I am the Lord your God."

We have no specific Biblical reference to the dwelling in booths during the desert journey. We may assume that this was the natural condition of those who journeyed through the desert. A frail booth was their only protection against the blazing sun.

The significance of remembering that the booth was the only shelter available to our ancestors during their desert days is to remind us that security is not to be found in the massive, well-furnished, and elaborate home, but in the knowledge of God's providence. The booth is indeed a frail structure, open to the elements, but whoever assumes that life can be rendered impregnable to the elements cherishes an illusion. There is a precarious quality to all of life, especially the life of the Jewish people. Material shelters offer but illusory protection against the shifting play of circumstances. Only in God are we

made secure, and the booth, or the *sukkah*, in which we dwell during the week of the Sukkot festival subtly suggests that we place our trust in God's protection and that in Him alone is the true and unfailing shelter for our existence.

The three Pilgrimage festivals have a universal dimension. They are rooted in the specific experience of the Jewish people, but the values proclaimed are directed toward all mankind. The ideal of freedom as envisaged in the traditions centering around Pesah embraced all men and all nations. Its noblest expression is found in the *Haftarah* read on the last day of the Pesah festival. It is Isaiah's messianic vision (Isaiah 10:32-12:6), which affirms the faith that a righteous leader is destined to arise "and the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of the knowledge and of the fear of the Lord . . . and righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins." And under his ministration there will finally occur the moral revolution of the world, "when the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid, and the calf and the young lion and the fatling shall graze together and a little child shall lead them . . . They shall not hurt nor destroy on all My Holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the water covers the sea."

Indeed, the story of the Exodus has entered the stream of world history to become a saga of the universal struggle against tyranny and of the promise that freedom's cause is irresistible and is destined to prevail no matter how formidable the forces arrayed against it. "Let my people go!" has been reiterated by the oppressed of all the ages as they sought to break the shackles of whatever Pharaoh who was the tyrant who held them in bondage. And the vision of the children of

Israel marching toward the Promised Land has been the inspiration all through the ages for peoples on the march toward the horizons of a better life enabling them to fulfill their God-implemented yearning to be free.

Shavuot too has a universal dimension. It commemorates the revelation at Sinai, but while the event occurred within the life of the people of Israel, its reference was not confined to one people. It was meant to be the light to shine for all people in their groping toward the truth. The Rabbis (Mekhilta on Exodus 19:2) express this in a well-known homily based on the fact that Sinai was a no man's land, part of the open world of the desert over which—at least in ancient times—no nation claimed an exclusive sovereignty. The Torah was given in the desert, a no man's land, we are told, to suggest that the Torah is not meant to be an exclusive possession of any particular nation. It speaks to men across every frontier, whether of land or of ethnic or national identity. The Jewish people are meant to be its protagonists and exemplars, but the Torah is intended to lead all men toward God.

Sukkot, too, has a universal reference. Both in its agricultural and its historical aspects, Sukkot stresses divine providence as the source of man's security and hope. It included, as part of the Temple ritual by which it was commemorated, a dramatic ceremony of water libation upon the altar. It also included prayers for rain. But the prosperity and well-being for which our forefathers prayed was not self-centered. It was extended to include all the nations of the world. A major theme of this festival was the offering of seventy sacrifices in the Temple to invoke God's blessings on all the peoples of the world.

The Temple service centering in the offering of sacrifices has of course become obsolete. But this dimension of the

Sukkot festival has found reincarnation in a special prayer for the welfare of all nations offered on Mount Zion by representatives of the Chief Rabbinate of modern Israel. This reads as follows: "Heavenly Father, in days gone by our forefathers offered unto Thee seventy sacrifices on the feast of Sukkot to invoke Thy blessings for the peace and welfare of all the nations of the world. We direct to Thee our prayers in like entreaty. Have mercy on Thy world, upon all the countries and nations therein. Shield us from all destruction and warfare. Thou who art the source of peace, inspire all nations with the spirit of good will, justice and brotherhood. Guide them to establish a lasting peace among all the peoples of the world, as Thou didst promise by Thy holy prophets in their vision of the End of Days. Amen."

The Sukkot festival is concluded with *Simhat Torah*, a day of rejoicing to mark the completion of the annual cycle of weekly Torah readings and the commencement of another cycle of readings for the new year.

We have two additional primary festivals in the calendar of Judaism, *Rosh Hashanah* and *Yom Kippur*. These are entirely universal in orientation; it is not so much as a citizen of a community but as a child of God that we face our Creator on these days.

The routine of ordinary life, of getting and spending in which, as Wordsworth put it, we lay waste our powers, is broken most dramatically by the days of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, or the High Holy Days, as these are called. A month before Rosh Hashanah, each morning at the synagogue service, the *shofar*, or ram's horn, is sounded to remind us that the solemn season is dawning upon the world, and the call is issued to our hearts to prepare.

The days of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur summon man

to the vision that his real self is the divine image within him, that the meaning of his life be measured in the victory he has achieved in disciplining his baser self and bending it to serve his higher purposes. These days summon him to continue his quest toward the highest and to that end to renounce his sins, his deficiencies. It is because every man can be better than he is that every man needs to renounce deficiency, to overcome sin.

Man's sin is his clinging to the lower rather than the higher self. His sin may express itself in deeds done or deeds not done. But every deficiency, every sin, has also a relationship to his Creator. It is a withdrawal from God, from the God whose image he bears. On the other hand, every step forward in his quest for perfection is a return to God. The Hebrew term for this return is *teshuvah*, and *teshuvah* is the continued call of the High Holy Day season.

The need for *teshuvah* is grounded in one sense on the claim which God has upon man. God is the Father, the Provider, the gracious Giver, of all we have and all we prize. He yearns for our love not because our love adds anything to His perfection, but because our love for Him is an indication that we have understood our true relationship to Him.

But the need for *teshuvah* is also grounded on the consequences which derive from the alienation of man from God. Man is free, if he will, to turn his back upon his Creator, but he pays a price for this. For our lives are constantly under God's judgment. Life without God is a life beset by the misery of loneliness and frustration. Sin is a kind of sickness, a sickness of the spirit, and the only therapy open to us is to renounce sin, to return to God. *Teshuvah* is the road to the healing of the spirit.

The solemn lessons of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur

are articulated in the prayers recited on those days. The lessons are also expressed through certain rites. On Rosh Hashanah the principal rite is the sounding of the *shofar*. The following ten meanings of the *shofar* are based on the interpretation of the great philosopher of Judaism, Saadiah Gaon:

1. The sound of the *shofar* is analogous to the trumpet blasts which announce the coronation of a king. On Rosh Hashanah, we remember that God created the world and assumed the role of its Sovereign, and in the sounding of the *shofar* we acknowledge Him as our King.

2. Rosh Hashanah is the first of the Ten Days of Penitence, and the *shofar* is sounded to stir our conscience, to confront our past errors and return to God, who is ever ready to welcome the penitent.

3. The *shofar* is reminiscent of God's revelation at Sinai, which was accompanied by the sounding of a *shofar*. It thus reminds us of our destiny—to be a people of Torah, to pursue its study, and to practice its commandments.

4. The sound of the *shofar* is reminiscent of the exhortations of the prophets, whose voices rang out like a *shofar* in denouncing their people's wrongdoing and in calling them to the service of God and man.

5. The *shofar* reminds us of the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem, and it calls us to strive for Israel's renewal in freedom and in fellowship with God.

6. The *shofar*, which is a ram's horn, reminds us of the ram which Abraham offered as a sacrifice in place of his son Isaac. It thus reminds us of the heroic faith of the fathers of our people, who exemplified to us the highest devotion to God of which man is capable.

7. The *shofar* summons us to the feeling of humility before God's majesty and might, which are manifested by all things and by which our own lives are constantly surrounded.

8. The *shofar* is a reminder of the Day of the Final Judgment, calling upon all men and all nations to prepare for God's scrutiny of their deeds.

9. The *shofar* foreshadows the jubilant proclamation of freedom, when the exiled and homeless of the Jewish people are to return to the Holy Land. It calls us to believe in Israel's deliverance at all times and under all circumstances.

10. The *shofar* foreshadows the end of the present world order and the inauguration of God's reign of righteousness throughout the world, with a regenerated Israel leading all men in acknowledging that God is One and His name One.

The principal rite on Yom Kippur is the fast and the renunciation of all bodily pleasures. This is a token of remorse in wrongdoing and of the resolution to strive more earnestly for righteousness, to find reconciliation with God and man as a vital preliminary to earning what is life's choicest grace—atonement and forgiveness.

The mood of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur is a solemn and grave one, but it is not morbid. On the contrary, in sounding the call to *teshuvah*, to penitence, man is given hope. The optimism of these days is perhaps best expressed in the Book of Jonah, which is read in the synagogue on Yom Kippur at *Minhah*, at the waning of the day.

The *Haftarah* accents the sacredness of human life and man's endless possibility to be restored to God's grace. God

summoned Jonah, we are told, to preach penitence to Nineveh, a pagan city steeped in sin. Jonah was reluctant, and he tried to escape the summons by taking flight. But God continued to pursue him until he yielded. He went to Nineveh—and Nineveh repented. We are thus reminded that there are no souls lost beyond redemption. Our duty is to bring God's word to all who have strayed and to trust that all men have the power to be won by it.

During his flight, Jonah was thrown overboard from the ship on which he sailed; he was swallowed by a big fish; the fish spat him out, and he sang in thankfulness to God for his deliverance. This, too, was a lesson to Jonah. A man may return from the lowest depths, even from the depths of sin. Of the living we dare not despair. We must always strive for deliverance and trust that God will reinforce our efforts in favor of man's redemption.

One of the most touching moments in the story is the lesson of the gourd. In the heat of the day, Jonah found shade under a giant gourd, but it soon perished, and he grieved for it. God brought home to him the lesson. Jonah had cherished the humble gourd because he had experienced its use. But all God's creatures have value, certainly a city teeming with people like Nineveh, and every effort should be made to save them.

There are also two minor festivals in the Jewish calendar, *Purim* and *Hamukkah*, and a number of fast days. *Purim* commemorates the rescue of the Jewish community in Persia whose destruction had been planned by the wicked Haman. Historians have found it difficult to determine the specific setting when this episode occurred. The story of the plot and its frustration is unfolded in the Book of Esther, named after the heroine, the Jewish queen of the Persian king, whose in-

tercession saved the Jews from extermination. The story, whose reading is a major element in the celebration of the festival, satirizes Haman, and invokes humor to reinforce its thesis. In exaggerated terms, as befits satire, Haman's evil scheme is described as well as the end which befell him and his followers.

Hanukkah commemorates the successful struggle of the Jewish community in Palestine under the Maccabees for religious freedom against the Syrian armies of Antiochus IV in 164 B.C.E. Palestine was part of greater Syria, and when Antiochus attempted to uproot the practices of Judaism, a revolt ensued which led to the re-establishment of Jewish freedom. Hanukkah commemorates an event crucial for the survival of Judaism as a force in civilization, and its yearly celebration serves as a renewal in Jewish religious loyalty. The major element in the celebration of the Hanukkah festival is the kindling of lights each of the eight days of the festival, a reenactment of the lights kindled in the Temple of Jerusalem after it was cleansed of its pagan pollution and rededicated to the faith of Israel.

The fasts include *Shivah Asar Be-Tammuz* (17th day of *Tammuz*), which commemorates the breaking of the walls of Jerusalem which led to the city's fall and to the destruction of the Temple, first by the Babylonians in 586 B.C.E., and later by the Romans under Titus in 70 C.E.; *Tishah Be-Av* (9th day of *Av*), which marks the fall of the first Temple to the Babylonians and of the second to the Romans; *Tzom Gedaliah* which commemorates the date when Gedaliah, the Jewish Governor appointed by the Babylonians in 586 B.C.E., was assassinated, leading to the full destruction of Jewish autonomy in Palestine; *Asarah Be-Tevet* (10th day of *Tevet*), which marks the date when the Babylonians laid siege to Jeru-

salem in the days of the first Temple; *Taanit Esther*, which is celebrated on the eve of Purim and commemorates the fast of Esther prior to her going before the king to plead for her people.

These fasts serve to recall tragic episodes in the history of the Jewish people. But the context of interpretation placed upon them raised them to a more universal dimension. The banishment from the Holy Land was interpreted as a result of divine retribution visited upon the children of Israel because of failure to be faithful to the teachings of the Torah. Restoration was promised if the Jewish people should merit it, by changing its ways. The lesson expressed by these facts thus tended further to confirm the faith in God's direction of history and especially His providential concern with the destiny of the Jewish people.

The mourning for Jerusalem's destruction has kept alive in the Jewish people the yearning for the Return. It was part of the emotional conditioning that kept the Jewish people loyal to the memory of Zion. The practical labor of Israel's restoration in our own time was but a harnessing of energies that were stored in the Jewish soul during the centuries. Without the yearning for the Return fostered by these fasts the memories would have grown dim; Jews would eventually have adjusted to the loss of Zion, and it is doubtful if the modern restoration would have been possible. Of all the fast days related to loss of the Holy Land, *Tishah Be-Av* is the most general and the one most commonly observed.

The cycle of festivals fill the year with recurring landmarks that seek to pervade life with the continued awareness of God. But there were stretches of time when we are not touched by any of these. Judaism therefore devised additional tokens of God-consciousness which are to remain con-

stantly with us. There are principally three such tokens: the *tefillin* (phylacteries) worn on the arm and forehead; the fringes (*tzitzit*) on the four corners of the garment around which was tied a thread of blue; and the *mezuzah* attached to the doorpost of the house.

The *tefillin* and the *mezuzah* were conceived as a fulfillment of the injunction in Deuteronomy 6:8-9: "And you shall bind them for a sign upon your hand and they shall be for frontlets between your eyes. And you shall write them on the doorposts of your house and upon your gates."

The wearing of fringes on a garment is enjoined in Numbers 15:37-39: "And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: Speak to the children of Israel and bid them that they make them throughout their generations fringes with corners on their garments, and that they put with the fringe of each corner a thread of blue. And it shall be unto you for a fringe, that you may look upon it, and remember all the commandments of the Lord and do them."

The *tefillin* are receptacles containing parchment inscribed with the *Shema* (Deuteronomy 6:4-9) and with three other Biblical passages (Exodus 13:1-10, 11-16, and Deuteronomy 11:13-21) which bid us remember the Exodus from Egypt and call on us to submit to the discipline of God's commandments. In antiquity the *tefillin* were worn throughout the day (except on the Sabbath and the festivals). The subsequent development limited the wearing of the *tefillin* to the time of the weekday morning prayers.

The significance of the *tefillin* is well described in the introductory meditation which is recited prior to putting them on: "In the act of putting on the *tefillin* I desire to fulfill the commandment of my Creator who instructed us to put on the

tefillin. As it is written: And you shall bind them for a sign upon your hand, and they shall be for frontlets between your eyes. Within the *tefillin* are inscribed four chapters of the Torah, which proclaim the absolute unity of God, and remind us of the miracles He wrought for us when He took us out of Egypt, and declare His sovereign power over all things in heaven and on earth.

"He instructed us to put the *tefillin* upon the hand in remembrance of His mighty arm, with which He delivered us from the bondage of Egypt; and opposite the heart, as a sign of our duty to devote the impulses and emotions of our heart to His service, praised be He. We put the *tefillin* on the head, as a token of our duty to devote the mind, with all its faculties, to His service, praised be He.

"And may my observance of the commandment of the *tefillin* draw unto me sacred influences and holy thoughts, and guard me from every inclination to sin, in deed as in thought, that I may freely serve the Lord as it is in my heart to do. Amen."

The fringed garment was worn continually weekdays, as well as on the Sabbath and festivals. The knots into which the fringes were tied were a mnemonic device, serving to remind us of "all the commandments of the Lord"; the blue thread was a reminder of the blue heaven and, by further association, of the God of heaven. Here too, subsequent development wrought changes. The blue originally used was made from a secretion of a mollusc, by a process perfected by the ancient Phoenicians which eventually fell into decline. This led to the elimination of the thread of blue. The fringed garment itself was eventually transformed into the *talit*, the special shawl worn during prayers. The original concept of

the permanently worn fringed garment became the *arba kanfot*, a four cornered undergarment, worn by those zealous in fulfilling the Biblical ordinance.

The *mezuzah* has remained unchanged. It consists of a metallic or wooden receptacle in which is placed a piece of parchment inscribed with two Biblical passages, Deuteronomy 6:4-9 and Deuteronomy 11:13-20; the former passage is the *Shema* which proclaims the unity of God and bids us love Him with heart and soul and might, and the latter is the passage calling on us to submit to the discipline of God's commandments.

The rites we have discussed are all directed toward sensitizing us to God-consciousness. But the ethical motif is not ignored. We have noted the ethical motif in the Sabbath; the slave and even the beast of burden were to be given a day of rest. In the version of the Ten Commandments given in Deuteronomy 5:12-15, the text motivates the commandment of the Sabbath by the recollection of slavery in Egypt. After calling for the bestowal of Sabbath rest upon the entire household, upon man and beast, and upon the stranger, the text adds: "And you shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt and the Lord brought you out from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm; therefore did the Lord your God command you to keep the Sabbath."

A dominant note in the Pilgrimage festivals is the call to share one's substance with the needy. The Scriptural lessons read in the Synagogue on those days include the ethical exhortation in Deuteronomy 14:22—16:17. It calls for the remission of debts in the Sabbatical year. It calls for help to the poor and the needy. This concern for the poor has led to the beautiful institution of *ma'ot bittim* for Pesah, the distribution of funds to the needy to help them celebrate the festival in

proper style. At the opening of the *Seder*, as the *Haggadah* is begun, there is the invitation to the poor: "Let all who are hungry come partake in the Passover feast with us." The Book of Esther prescribes similarly that the celebration of Purim include giving gifts to the poor.

The High Holy Days bear likewise an ethical message. It receives its most dramatic emphasis in the lesson from Scripture read on Yom Kippur. It is taken from the prophet Isaiah, with its passionate outcry against religious formalism and the demand that religion be equated with moral action. It includes these pointed words, pointed because the major rite by which the day is commemorated is the fast: "Is such the fast I have chosen, the day for a man to afflict himself? Is it to bow down his head as a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? Is this a fast, a day acceptable to the Lord? Is not this the fast I have chosen, to loosen the fetters of wickedness, to undo the bonds of tyranny, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, to bring the homeless and unfortunate into your home, that when you see the naked you clothe him, and that you do not hide yourself from a fellow man?"

The ethical note as here defined places its emphasis on the duties we owe to a fellow human. There is one institution among the religious rites of Judaism where the ethical value expressed is directed primarily to the duties we owe toward the animal. It is the institution of the Jewish dietary laws, or *Kashrut*.

When he lived in a state of total innocence in the Garden of Eden, man was a vegetarian; he was not permitted to eat meat. It was after the time of the Flood that Noah was first given permission to eat meat. But Jewish law surrounded this permission with various limitations, to remind man that

the animal is endowed with value and must not be abused.

The act of slaughtering the animal was regulated by the law of *Kashrut* so as to inflict a minimum of pain on the creature. The practice, current in ancient times, of tearing a limb from the animal while still alive, was forbidden. It was forbidden to slaughter an animal on the same day with its mother, in order, as Maimonides explained it (*Guide for the Perplexed*, III, 48), "that people should be restrained and prevented from killing the two together in such a manner that the young is slain in the sight of the mother; for the pain of the animal under such circumstances is very great." The blood which is the seat of life was not to be eaten under any circumstances; the practice of *Kashrut* calls for treating meat with a special process of salting and washing to remove all blood still lingering in the flesh.

The animals selected as fit for use as food were those domesticated and whose eating habits were herbivorous. Carnivorous animals or birds which feed on the flesh of their own kind, a kind of cannibalism on the animal and bird level, were forbidden. The same regulations applied to the qualification of animals for use on the altar in the Temple in Jerusalem; the home was conceived as a Temple, and the table as an altar where we serve God.

Man himself has emerged from a predatory past. His own nature still carries vestiges of animality, of fierce, aggressive instincts. The objection to the use of predatory birds and animals on the altar of the Temple as well as on the table of the home was a vivid reminder of man's need to continue the effort to tame his fiercer instincts and to pursue the goals of domesticity and gentleness. It was intended to help toward "the healing of the human spirit," as the popular moralistic work *Shevet Musar* puts it.

Rites and Values

The rigorous conditions which had to be met in slaughtering an animal eventually created a professional "slaughterer," or *shohet*. The layman lost the right to take the life of an animal altogether. The professional slaughterer was licensed to perform his work, and he was under continued supervision to make certain that he remained faithful to the standards set for humane slaughter.

The boiling of "the kid in its mother's milk," a practice followed in the fertility rites of ancient paganism and deemed especially cruel and offensive by the Biblical legislator, was also forbidden (Deuteronomy 14:21). Jewish teachers felt so keenly on the subject that they extended this prohibition to demand the total separation of meat from dairy dishes.

The term "mother's milk," as used in the Scriptural text, is not to be taken literally, according to Rabbi Moses ben Nahman. The term "mother," he explained, is rather to be applied to any female when in a nursing state; any female giving milk is, in other words, a mother. Milk is the element expressive of the highest compassion which the Creator planted into the natural order, and the animal yields it in great bounty for the benefit of other creatures, primarily, of course, for its own young. The eating of meat is a reminder of a predatory aspect of man, who sustains himself by taking the life of another creature, including the creature who lavishes upon him her motherly gift of milk. It is a moral compromise for man to eat meat altogether. It is especially offensive to eat meat and milk together, to take a creature's milk and eat her flesh at the same time.

The values we have discussed are communicated through constant reminders, but it is noted that these reminders are in every instance expressed not through words but through the more potent pedagogy of action. Learning by doing has been

acknowledged by all educators as more effective than learning by verbal repetition.

But the pedagogy of these rites contributes an additional service. It conditions man to submit to discipline. It trains him in the awareness that life is not a spontaneous play of impulse, that man cannot choose on the ground of instinctive appeal, that other considerations must enter into our choice, considerations of right and wrong, of permitted and forbidden. The goal of moral education is to include such considerations in the weighing of our conduct. It is such considerations that leave us with the understanding that man, with his private passions and ambitions, is not the measure of all things, that he lives under God's judgment, and that his actions must conform to the claims of the Eternal.

We have another body of rites which apply the values of Judaism to critical moments in the life of the person, to teach us that the ebb and flow of individual existence is also within the workings of divine providence.

The birth of a child, the attainment of puberty, marriage, bereavement—these were all utilized as occasions to remind man of God's providence and of God's claim on man's reverence. The naming of the child was turned into a religious rite; a girl is named in the synagogue with appropriate prayers that acknowledge God as the Author of life and affirm the values toward which the parents are to raise their new daughter. A son is named at the rite of circumcision, which occurs on the eighth day. The prayers recited and the act of circumcision itself express the awesome nature of the covenant which binds each Jew to his faith, committing him to be faithful to his God with his very life.

A first-born son, unless either of his parents is a descendent of a *Kohen* or a *Levi*, is "redeemed" on the thirty-first day

of his birth. The "redemption" of the first-born carries memories of the remotest antiquity in Judaism, but it also helps impress upon us the divine dimension in our existence. In ancient times, it had been the Jewish custom for every first-born son to become the religious leader of his family group. From the very time of his birth he was consecrated to a special vocation—to be a minister of God. In due time, God's ministry was transferred to a special order of priests, the *Kohanim*, who were assisted by the *Levi'im*. The first-born son was, however, still under a holy charge. There still clung to him the old commitment to prepare himself for the career of a religious leader. It then became the practice for the father to redeem his first-born son from his commitment so as to be free to raise him for such vocation as he would adopt of his own free choice. He redeemed him from the *Kohen* who had succeeded the first-born in God's ministry. The reminder that we live our lives under God was thus admitted among the reactions felt by parents at this most stirring event in their lives, the arrival of their first-born son.

The dawn of puberty, when the child stands at the threshold of a mature existence, was also seized upon by Jewish tradition in its quest for opportunities to break in on life with the reminder of God. The rite of *Bar Mitzvah* was evolved to express for the boy that maturity is to be equated with the awareness of responsibility to God. The rise of the woman's role in public life and her ever greater involvement in her religious community has led to the development, in our time, of a parallel rite for girls, the *Bat Mitzvah*, which has been adopted in some Jewish communities.

The union of a male and a female as mates occurs in all of nature. Once again Jewish tradition created a context that enables the young couple to recognize that their union expresses

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one of the basic laws in the divine ordering of existence. The Jewish marriage service is solemn, and it invests the occasion with deep spiritual significance. The couple pledge their love to one another as they stand before God, and they acknowledge that it is before God that their union will be judged for the way they will fulfill their roles as mates and eventually as God's collaborators in the begetting of new life.

Life's major crisis is bereavement, especially of those nearest of kin, parents, brothers, sisters, a child, a partner in marriage. Here, too, Judaism asserts itself to add a dimension of meaning, to speak in the moment of confusion and bewilderment the word of faith. It dignifies life by surrounding the death with expressions of sorrow. The proper care of the dead body is carefully prescribed. It objects, for example, to the mutilation of the body even after life has departed. It therefore objects on the one hand to cremation and on the other hand to a medical autopsy, unless there is clear indication that such autopsy will advance some special knowledge in medical science that will help combat disease. A symbol of the loss sustained is worn on the garment, by tearing it in a conspicuous place. For a week one remains withdrawn from normal pursuits, remaining in seclusion at home, avoiding the usual pleasures and comforts, sitting on a low stool, meditating, speaking in a hushed voice. Friends come and offer condolences, which help to define the measure of the loss suffered, and at the same time begin the therapy by which we are helped to meet our grief without faltering in our faith that this is a divinely directed universe.

The direction toward which our hearts are turned is indicated by the formula pronounced as the rite of tearing the garment is performed. "Praised be Thou, O Lord our God,

King of the universe, who art a righteous Judge." It is a formula which expresses not bitterness, but the awareness that God's government of the universe includes what we call death, no less than life, that death does not negate divine providence, but is instead, in its own way, an illustration of it. The chief intuition which rationalizes this faith is the recognition that death is not a total obliteration of existence, that a dimension of individuality, what we call the soul, survives death, and that, to the measure of its perfection by the acquisition of wisdom and the performance of good deeds, the soul continues to play a creative role in the world by the incitement of the quest for a like perfection in the souls of the living who felt its radiant influence.

The full rites of mourning apply for the first seven days following bereavement. This is called *shivah*, which means seven. Some restrictions are kept for the rest of the month (*sheloshim*, literally thirty days), and some, such as the shunning of purely social gatherings, are kept for the rest of the year. Throughout the year (minus a month) a child recites the *Kaddish* in memory of a parent, an affirmation of faith in divine providence made poignantly meaningful because it comes at a time of testing.

Jewish tradition added a further note to help us meet the crisis of bereavement by giving permanence to our memories through the recurrent commemoration of our memorial anniversaries. Each year, on the anniversary of death, we keep the *yahrtzeit*, a day of solemn remembering in prayer and meditation; the chief expression of the *yahrtzeit* rites is the recitation of the *Kaddish*. A memorial service (*Yizkor*) is also included as part of the service on the festivals of Passover, Shavuot, Sukkot, and Yom Kippur.

Anthropologists have sometimes endeavored to trace a relationship between some of the rites of Judaism and pagan rites in surrounding cultures. Circumcision, for example, has been practiced by many tribes throughout the ancient world. The use of knots as a magic device to ward off evil spirits is common among the superstitious peoples of antiquity, and this has been cited as a parallel to the knots in the fringe prescribed for each corner of the garment. But it should not surprise us that our teachers utilized materials prevalent in their world in fashioning the tokens of their own religious ideals. The parchment on which the scribe writes the text of the Torah was at one time the skin of an animal. But once used as parchment for the inscription of the sacred text, it has lost its original status. The prehistory of a religious rite plays no part in the new role to which it has been assigned by the authors of Jewish tradition. Its new role is to serve as a channel of communication reminding man that his life is not completed on the level of immediacy, that it also bears upon itself links with the divine dimension which pervades all of God's creation.

Some scholars are prepared to accept the rites of Judaism as a unique pedagogy in God-consciousness, but they look upon them as the folk creation of the Jewish people, an expression of its unique genius in the realm of religious creativity. It is in consonance with the secular interpretation of history, which sees only a human dimension in historical development. Max Planck, the noted physicist and mathematician who ventured into the field of religious speculation, took this view in his definition of religious symbols: "They [religious symbols]," he declared, "signify the highest and most venerated of all the products of human imagination directed heavenward. But we

must never forget that even the most sacred symbol is of human origin.”¹

Judaism holds the view that its rites and symbols have a divine origin. The performance of every rite, even the rite of slaughtering an animal as ritually prescribed, is preceded by a benediction praising God who “sanctified us by His commandments and commanded us” to perform the particular rite. In what sense did Judaism hold these rites divinely ordained?

Jewish teachers did not deny a human role in the development of their religious institutions. But the human role was only an aspect of the event under discussion, whose full significance was not exhausted on the human plane alone. For men created under the impact of an inspiration, and the inspiration had its source in God. The rules of humane slaughter, for example, were given their specific formulation by men, but the pity for the life of the animal and the concern to protect the animal from unnecessary pain derived ultimately from an ethical sense, which is a divine endowment in our nature. It rests, too, on the teaching of the Torah, which is for us a divinely inspired charter for our lives. The rules defining humane slaughter thus have a human as well as a divine origin. They are part of a process of sanctification to which all the commandments are dedicated.

The entire body of rites that are to serve as tokens of God-consciousness and of the ethical values which embody His will breaks into the routine of our lives to enlarge the context of our existence. The endless pursuit after mundane things, to gratify our natural instincts for food, shelter, a home, a fam-

¹ Max Planck: *Scientific Autobiography* (New York: Philosophical Library; 1949), p. 165.

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ily, material possessions, is modified by the imposition of other demands, that we reckon with the claims which derive from the Eternal. Throughout the busy round of our existence we hear the reiteration that we live in a world which is suffused with God's love and that the noblest expression of this awareness is to return love for love. We return God's love by direct tokens of our adoration and by the love we bestow on His creatures, upon whom He lavished His solicitousness and whom He created in accordance with His will.



XIII



The People, the Book, and the Land

THERE IS A BOUNDARY which marks the zone of man's domain. Sometimes the boundary shifts and man's domain is enlarged, but there is a limit nevertheless. Why is the universe as it is? We can describe the order, the flawless harmony. But our description only portrays *what* exists, not *why* it exists. And when we leave the realm of the physical and enter the realm envisioned by the eyes of faith and intuition we are forced to halt at a similar boundary. We glimpse certain truths, but why these truths are as they are we know not. In God's plan to illumine His children with the knowledge of His being and to redeem them from superstition and falsehood a certain design is clearly at work. It involves the mediation of a particular people, a particular book, and a particular land.

The particular people is the Jewish people, the book is the

Bible, and the land is *Eretz Yisrael*. Why these were chosen for their mediating role we cannot really know. What we can know, and what will be fruitful to know, is the fuller significance of the chosenness bestowed on these three in the design of God for the illumination and redemption of man.

It is one of the basic teachings of Judaism that the Jewish people holds a special place in the scheme of God's providence. We find expressions of this belief in all authoritative expositions of the Jewish religion. It is affirmed repeatedly in the Bible. Thus Exodus 19:5 declares: "Now, therefore, if you will hearken unto My voice indeed and keep My covenant, then you shall be Mine own treasure from among all peoples; for all the earth is Mine, and you shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." A similar affirmation is found in Deuteronomy 26:18-19: "The Lord has declared this day concerning you that you are a people for His own possession, as He has promised you, and that you are to keep all His commandments, that He will set you high above all nations He has made, in praise and in fame and in honor, and you shall be a people holy to the Lord your God, as He has spoken." Similar pronouncements are to be found in the writings of the prophets. Its most familiar expression is in the liturgy: "Thou hast chosen us from among all the nations, Thou hast loved us and favored us, Thou hast exalted us above all tongues and hast hallowed us by Thy commandments. Thou, our King, hast drawn us close to Thy service and Thou hast invoked Thy holy name upon us."

What is the meaning of this doctrine? Is it consistent with a universal God to favor a particular people? Is He not the Creator of all men, and should not all peoples be equally precious to Him? The belief that God has assigned a special place to the Jewish people in the scheme of things appears to us

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like a claim to national or racial superiority. We often encounter such claims in the name of particular nations, races, social classes, and invariably the pride and group egoism born of such claims have proven a source of grief in civilization. Is the Jewish belief different in its meaning, and shall the modern Jew hold on to it as a vital element of his faith?

A doctrine, even when fully supported by reason and experience, has a limited range of truth. The limitations of language lead us to state our doctrines in categorical terms, omitting the qualifying elements which indicate the limited scope of meaning which it is our intention to give it. The result is that the doctrine is sometimes carried beyond its proper scope, which may distort its truth into falsehood. Thus we say that freedom is a good, but we also know that freedom without qualification would beget anarchy, which would prove destructive of all social cohesiveness. Unqualified freedom degenerates to license and becomes an evil rather than a good.

The doctrine that the Jewish people holds a special place in the scheme of divine providence rests on firm ground; it is substantiated by a reasoned inquiry into the nature of our faith. But to grasp its truth, it is necessary to define its scope, to spell out its proper limitations.

It is entirely consistent with what we know of life to believe in God's selection of a particular people for a special bestowal of His love. Throughout the entire complex of life in the universe there is the evidence of a process of differentiation and specialization. Of the myriad organisms that make up the plethora of beings that inhabit the world, each reveals a uniqueness of form, a distinctiveness of function. Each person is a distinct individual, unduplicated by another. Every flower has its own life, its own fragrance, its own color. The

Author of existence has made every being an original creation; He has invested each with unique endowments. There is a larger purpose served by each, but each carries an irreplaceable role in this common service. The Rabbis were so impressed by this phenomenon of individual uniqueness that they asked each person to think of the whole world as existing because of him, for each person helps to complete the world, and without the particular role which he alone is equipped to play in it the world would be defective and incomplete.

The creative sharing in the purpose of existence is a privilege God has bestowed upon His creatures. The unique endowments by which they are enabled to play their particular roles is a token of God's special love.

The process of existence is not always pursued on the level of self-consciousness. On the subhuman level creatures fulfill their appointed destinies in response to instinctual pressures resident in their natures. On the human level, too, life is often nonreflective, outer-directed, or instinctual. It is only as men rise to maturity that they see themselves as God's partners in the drama of existence, and then they know that they have been the recipients of some special grace from the hand of the Creator. God has showered special graces, special tokens of His favor, upon each of His creatures, but they are not all aware of it. If they were they would each join in a mighty chorus to praise the Creator for having chosen them, each in His own way, to play a role in the stupendous drama of His creation.

The Jewish doctrine of chosenness is a mark of the spiritual maturity of the Jewish people, who felt themselves singularly blessed and singularly privileged. Wherever reference is made to the Jewish people as God's chosen, it is always associated with specific conditions. Sometimes it is associated with God's

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protection in having enabled them to survive perils. A very common association is with the Torah, which they acknowledged was a divine gift and in which they saw a sign of God's special love. It was a mark of humility on their part not to claim these achievements as their own, as the fruit of their own valor or wisdom, as the creation of their own national genius. They were conscious that "their own strength and the firmness of their own hands" could not have won these things for them. Humbly they expressed their indebtedness to God, who had privileged them to be selected for a special role in His service.

What about other peoples? Should not a universal God bestow tokens of His love on all peoples? The answer to this is certainly in the affirmative. "All creatures are His creatures," declared Saadiah Gaon, "and we may not say that He has taken to Himself one, to the exclusion of the other, or to a greater degree than another." For, "if God had chosen but one man and one city, who would remember the rest of mankind?" The truth is that the acknowledgment of being God's chosen only testifies to the maturity of a people that has become aware of its divine Benefactor and is thereby seeking to extol Him and to praise Him. Thus, when the Psalmist exclaimed (Psalms 16:5), "The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance and my cup," did He alone want to possess the Master of the worlds? ¹

God is the God of Abraham, but this does not contradict His also being the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob. The Jewish people have found tokens of His favor in their history, and they acclaimed Him as their God, but comparable tokens

¹ Israel Davidson, *Saadiah's Polemic Against Hivi Al-Balkhi* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary; 1915), pp. 59, 60; *The Book of Beliefs and Opinions* II, 11.

of His favor are surely discernible in the careers of all other people, and it is for each of them to acclaim Him similarly as their God, their Benefactor too. A parent loves each of his children with a special love, and so does the Creator, the Father of all men and all nations. The prophet Isaiah dreamt of the time when God's love for all men and all nations would be universally acknowledged. There will come a time, he declared (19:24-25) when Israel shall "be the third with Egypt and with Assyria, a blessing in the midst of the earth, for that the Lord of hosts has blessed him saying: 'Blessed be Egypt My people and Assyria the work of My hands, and Israel Mine inheritance.'"

The belief in being chosen for a special purpose in God's scheme of things carries with it a grave responsibility. It means that the people were not free to live as they pleased, that they were under an onerous commitment. Every human life is, of course, under a commitment; every one has the obligation to serve God with whatever he has been given. But the Jewish people, having become *conscious* of their commitment, carry a graver responsibility. Lapses from the goal which they must serve will count heavily against them, more heavily than they would count against a people that remained unenlightened as to its obligations. The prophet Amos drove home this truth to his people. Some of them interpreted their chosenness as a mark of God's favoritism. They saw themselves as being the only ones chosen by God, and therefore, they reasoned smugly, they could expect favorite treatment at the hand of God. Amos reversed their logic (3:2): "You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore will I visit upon you all your iniquities!"

The two aspects in Israel's chosenness are linked together in the concept of the covenant. God "chose" the Jewish people,

and the Jewish people in turn chose God as their God, to submit to His will, to study and heed His commandments. The scene of the covenant was Sinai. It was at Sinai that the children of Israel were given the terms under which they could function as God's people (Exodus 19:5): "Now, therefore, if you will hearken unto My voice indeed, and keep My covenant, then shall you be Mine own treasure from among all peoples." The children of Israel agreed and bound themselves by this covenant as we are told (Exodus 19:8): "And all the people answered together, and said, All that the Lord hath spoken we will do."

The terms of the covenant obligated the Jewish people to be "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." The term "holy," the Hebrew *kadosh*, means "separated," and the exhortation to be a "holy nation" was defined by the Rabbis (Lekah Tov on Exodus 19:5) as the obligation to be "dissociated from the idolators and their abominations." Its positive connotation was to pursue the study of the Torah and to abide by its commandments. The core of the commandments was given at Sinai, but the entire body of law became obligatory upon them, all the Biblical enactments as well as the ramifications of these laws which appear in the writings of the Rabbis. The law given at Sinai consisted of general categories, and it proliferated, yielding the larger body of precepts which make up the discipline of Judaism. Jewish teachers looked upon the law given at Sinai as the seed, and every later development was seen as part of the unfolding, of the abundance which had been carried by the initial seed. As a well-known Talmudic maxim put it (Yerushalmi Hagigah 1:8): "Every new teaching which a later sage is destined to promulgate is part of the law given at Sinai."

The terms of the covenant also obligated the children of

Israel to be "a kingdom of priests." This represented their obligation to the rest of mankind, to bring all men to God's service. As the author of the *Yalkut Yehudah* (on Exodus 19:6) put it: "The priest is one who communicates knowledge to the people. Thus the people of Israel among the nations are obligated to serve as the priests who teach the entire human race the right path to walk in and the works which they are to do, and this instruction needs to be communicated not through words but through deeds; in other words, they are to serve, by their righteous deeds, as an example to all the nations."

The duty to communicate the principles of the Torah to the world is included in the commandment to sanctify God's name. Maimonides in his *Book of Precepts* lists this as the ninth of the positive commandments: "The ninth commandment is the commandment given us to sanctify the divine name, as it is written (Leviticus 22:32), 'And I shall be sanctified through the children of Israel.' The sense of this commandment is our obligation to disseminate our faith among all people." God's holiness rests on His own essence as God, and in a certain sense mortals can neither add nor detract from it, but in a world of superstition and falsehood God's holiness is obscured. The children of Israel, having in their custody the Torah, are under obligation to disseminate its light to the world so that falsehood and superstition be dispelled and the universal God be acknowledged as truly sovereign.

The "sanctification of God's name," to which Jews are committed, must not be confused with the missionary ideal pursued by many Christian denominations in the Western world. The latter is inspired by the conviction that formal adherence to Christianity is indispensable for a person's salvation. Judaism never insisted on the need for a formal conversion to

Judaism. For Judaism teaches that a person can remain within the framework of any religion, or even profess no formal religion at all, and yet rise to a recognition of the universal God and to a life of high ethical sensitivity. Such a person is regarded as one of the *hasiday umot ha-olam*, "of the pious from among the nations," and such a person is deemed "as precious in the sight of God as a High Priest in Israel" (Sifra on Leviticus 18:5).

Judaism is an open fellowship of faith, and it welcomes the sincere convert, but Judaism is content if a person embraces the universal element which it regards the core of its outlook on life, consisting principally of the so-called seven Noahide principles. These include the demand to avoid idolatry, bloodshed, and cruelty to animals, and on the positive side, the acknowledgment of the universal God and the pursuit of justice between man and man. These principles, Judaism has affirmed, can be expressed within any religious tradition, and there is no need for a person to withdraw from it. Thus when Aimé Pallière, then studying for the Catholic priesthood, turned to Rabbi Elijah Benamozegh with his decision to become a convert to Judaism, the latter dissuaded him, urging him to remain in the Church but to renounce the cult centering in the deification of Jesus. Indeed, he might render a greater service to truth by becoming a force within the Church for a purer faith than by cutting himself completely off from it. Aimé Pallière devoted the rest of his life as a witness to this universal core in Judaism which might serve as a leaven to stimulate spiritual progress within *any* religious community. Rabbi Kook stated this principle in the following succinct formulation: "It is not the purpose of the enlightenment which derives from Israel to absorb or destroy the other religions . . . but to stimulate them toward perfection and

higher development and toward the elimination of their baser elements. This applies even toward pagan cults and obviously so toward the religions (Christianity and Islam) whose foundations rest in part on the light of Israel's Torah." ²

How can the individual Jew further this mission to which the Jewish people is committed? Let him offer a noble example of his own faith, a sincere love for God, a sincere love for his fellow man. Let him master the knowledge of his heritage and translate its teachings into a life of virtue and high ideals. The contagion of a good life is always a contribution to the sanctification of God's name.

Another of the cardinal doctrines of Judaism is that God revealed Himself at Sinai and proclaimed His law to Moses in the presence of all the children of Israel. We read in Exodus 19:20-25, 20:1: "And the Lord came down on Mt. Sinai, to the top of the mountain, and the Lord called Moses to the top of the mountain, and Moses went up. . . . And God spoke all these words, saying . . ." This is how the giving of the Ten Commandments is introduced. But our tradition goes further and teaches us that the entire Torah was given by God to Moses, who subsequently taught it to the children of Israel. Maimonides lists this among the thirteen articles of the faith of Israel: "I believe," this article declares, "that the entire Torah now in our possession was given to our teacher Moses, peace be upon him." Other articles in the creed of Maimonides make the same claim for the teachings of the other prophets. This is a fundamental of our faith—we are asked to believe that God reveals Himself to people and imparts to them truths which He wants them to know and that in the Torah we have His most significant revelation.

² Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook: *Igrot*, Vol. I, Letter 112.

Modern people are often disinclined to believe this. They may admire the Bible as poetry, as literature, but they are likely to look upon it as a man-made work. They prefer to believe that the books of the Bible were created as other books are created, through the creative genius of its human authors. We are inclined to credit Moses himself with the early layers of the Biblical text. We are inclined to think that Amos and Isaiah and Ezekiel were great seers but that their books and those that bear the names of the other prophets reflect the workings of their own human minds. Jewish tradition speaks of the Torah as God's gift to the Jewish people for the larger benefit of the rest of mankind. We are likely to say that the Bible is a creation of the Jewish people and its choicest gift to civilization.

There are two reasons for this change in outlook. One is that we do not see God revealing Himself to man in our own time, and we cannot see why there should have been so different a condition in antiquity. Life seems to us as possessing qualities of continuity. If God revealed Himself to man in the past then we should find incidents of His revelation also in the present. If there is no trace of His revelation in the present we are not inclined to believe the stories of His revelation in the past.

Another factor has served to undermine our belief in divine revelation. It is the fact that historians have discovered the traces of human hands in the making of the Biblical text. Bible critics have shown that the Bible is not one book, with one style, with a singular approach to life. It consists, rather, of many books, and each book reflects a different style, a different emphasis on doctrine. Each book reflects the variation of authorship, of the period in which it was created, and of the locale where it took shape. Amos speaks sternly of God's jus-

tice, while Hosea is tender and suffused with the sense of God's love. The Book of Esther reflects harshly on the non-Jewish world, while the Book of Ruth is an idyllic story of the nobility of a pagan woman who cleaves to the people of Israel in a full identification with its destiny and who was deemed worthy to become the ancestor of King David and of the messiah. There are many exalted passages in the Pentateuch. But here are also echoes of the primitive, like the injunction not to suffer a witch to live. If God were the source of these writings, they would all be the same in form as well as in moral content, since God's word is unchanging and is not influenced by variations of time, place, and circumstances.

The root of our difficulty lies in our conception of revelation. We judge everything by ourselves. When we say that the teachings of the Torah were imparted to us by God, many of us assume that God imparted as we impart, that He spoke as we speak, that He conveyed His truths as we convey our truths. We accomplish these things through the use of physical organs, and therefore, we presume that God, too, must have performed these things through physical organs. This is the principal source of our difficulty, for we know intuitively that God is not physical, and consequently we shrink from ascribing such activities to Him.

Jewish teachers long ago cautioned us against conceiving revelation in such terms. It is the nature of human language, explained Rabbi Abraham ibn Ezra, to speak of the order of nature below the human as though it were human and similarly to bring the order above the human, the divine, down to the level of the human. The poet, for example, speaks of a tree lifting "her leafy arms to pray." This is, of course, a figure of speech in which a tree is spoken of as though it were a person. We think and speak of God similarly, by analogy to the hu-

man, but we must never forget that in God these actions are wholly different than they are on the human level.

When we say that God imparted the truths of the Torah to man, we are simply saying that these teachings were not wholly the creations of their human authors, that their ultimate source was in God.

As Maimonides phrased it: "When we are told that God addressed the prophets and spoke to them, our minds are merely to receive a notion that there is a divine knowledge to which the prophets attain; we are to be impressed with the idea that the things which the prophets communicate to us are not altogether the products of their own conceptions and ideas." As to the manner in which God causes His ideas to be transferred to the prophet, we cannot be altogether certain. It is a phase of God's creative activity which eludes our understanding. But of one thing we may be sure. God does not communicate as we communicate; He is incorporeal, and no corporeal instruments such as a mouth and speech are employed in the process. "We must not suppose," continued Maimonides, "that in speaking, God employed voice or sound" (*Guide*, I, 65).

There are two extremes in the interpretation of revelation or prophecy. Each is an exaggeration and must be avoided. One exaggeration sees the prophet as no more than a passive instrument of God's word. It denies the prophet any personal initiative in his reception or communication of his message. The other sees the prophet as no more than a man who is moved only by his own initiative and whose work is only his own creation. Dr. Abraham J. Heschel has cautioned us against both exaggerations: "By insisting on the absolutely objective and supernatural nature of prophecy, dogmatic theology has disregarded the prophet's part in the prophetic act.

Stressing revelation, it has ignored the response; isolating inspiration, it has lost sight of the human situation. In contrast . . . psychologists have sought to deduce prophecy entirely from the inner life of the prophets. Reducing it to a subjective personal phenomenon, they have disregarded the prophet's awareness of his confrontation with facts not derived from his own mind. . . . Careful analysis shows that the situation is composed of revelation and response, of receptivity and spontaneity, of event and experience."³

Why doesn't God reveal Himself to people nowadays, to communicate His will to them? *The answer is that He does.* People who have brought new visions of truth or beauty to the world and who have reflected on the process which underlies their creative acts have often spoken of the sense of receiving their ideas from a Power beyond themselves. A vivid account of this process is offered us by Mozart: "When I am, as it were, entirely alone, and of good cheer . . . my ideas flow best and most abundantly. Whence and how they come I know not, nor can I force them . . . All this fires my soul, and, provided I am not disturbed, my subject enlarges itself, becomes methodized and defined, and the whole, though it be long, stands almost complete and finished in my mind . . . What has been thus produced, I do not easily forget; and this is perhaps the best gift I have my Divine Maker to thank for." Walt Whitman in his autobiographical poem "Song of Myself" offers similar testimony. His spirit was touched by a vision which came to him in a mystical experience which was for him an encounter with the divine. The hand of God he clearly saw was the "elder hand" of his own, the spirit of God "the elder spirit" of his own. God was a

³ Abraham J. Heschel: *The Prophets* (New York: Burning Bush Press, 1962), p. xiii.

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partner, a senior partner in his creation. In one of the chants of this poem Walt Whitman declares:

Swiftly arose and spread around me
the peace and the joy and the knowledge
that pass all the art and argument of the earth;
And I know that the hand of God is
the elder hand of my own,
And I know that the spirit of God is
the elder spirit of my own.

We often use the term "inspiration" rather than "revelation." *Inspiration* means literally a *breathing in*. But who is it who breathes in upon the person and directs him to communicate to his fellow man? Every creative act where true inspiration is at work is a continuation of God's disclosure; it is a further unfolding of the light with which God began the order of creation. Maimonides teaches us that every creative act in any field of human endeavor, is an instance of the same process which was at work in *prophecy*. Prophecy, the exhortation of man to follow God's ways and the prediction of the dire consequences which will follow a rejection of His ways is, on all levels, God's boon to man, to help him meet his destiny by showing him the way he must go. Having created man for a noble end, God provided the means by which he might reach this end. Reason shows him part of the way, but part of the way he must see by a divine light which shines for certain sensitive spirits who then transmit as much of their light as they can to their fellow men.

Maimonides distinguished between a lower and a higher form of prophecy. In its most familiar form prophecy appears in the experience of a "call" which impels certain people to

perform heroic deeds in the service of some good cause or to become creative in the fields of theology, politics, science, or literature. Maimonides describes this call in words that ring familiar to any one who has probed into any phase of the creative process: "A person feels as if some thing came upon him, and as if he received a new power that encourages him to speak. He treats of science and composes hymns, exhorts his fellow-men, discusses political and theological problems; all this he does while awake and in the full possession of his senses" (*Guide*, II, 45). Some books of the Bible such as Psalms, Proverbs, Daniel, Job, and Chronicles clearly reflect this phase of prophecy.

This is, however, only a lower form of prophecy. In its highest expression, prophecy is a mystical experience of deeper dimensions. In the grip of this experience, on its deepest level, the prophets report a confrontation of the divine in a more dramatic form. In the course of this experience the prophet senses a great bodily agitation; he may hear voices and see visions, and an immense illumination lights up the mind as a flash of lightning lights up the darkness of the surrounding night. What normally requires laborious reasoning, and, indeed, what laborious reasoning cannot establish, is grasped intuitively and with an overpowering sense of certainty. The experiences of Ezekiel and Zechariah, so vividly described in the Bible, illustrate prophecy on this level.

How can we as ordinary mortals recognize the fruit of prophecy as an authentic revelation of the divine? The divine, which discloses itself to man in the experience of that illumination which we call prophecy, travels not only to the perceptive mind of the prophet. Through the prophet, it travels to other men. The ordinary man may not sense the beauty of a sunset in a direct encounter. But when he reads a poem or

looks at a picture glorifying the sunset his perceptive powers may be ignited, and he too can begin to see and feel the haunting beauty which the sunset discloses. It is similar with the fruits of prophecy. The rest of mankind, not privileged to encounter the divine directly, may be introduced to it through confronting the words of the prophets. The divine haunts every utterance which issues from the prophetic experience. The prophet's words are "magnetized" with the divine power which initially sent them forth into the world. A secondary revelation occurs whenever we study the words of the Torah, and we too come under the spell of the divine.

Primary inspiration is the gift bestowed on the chosen few, but the secondary inspiration is open to all. It is open to all, however, in varying measure. Some are more sensitive than others. The response to moral values or religious truth, like the response to beauty, will vary in intensity, depending on our varying degrees of sensitivity. What determines this sensitivity? Our intellectual and imaginative faculties, the state of our education, the extent to which we are actively concerned with the pursuit of these values—these play a part in creating sensitivity.

The active pursuit of moral and spiritual values is part of what Maimonides called the moral prerequisite for prophecy. The divine influence does not settle on a person capriciously. The intellect and the imagination are tools. The intellect functions in the revelational experience, to some extent, as it does in the act of reason. It translates the experience into intelligible conceptual terms. The imagination fashions the images, symbols, and myths by which the concepts are profusely illustrated, giving the inspired word its singular potency. But neither the intellect nor the imagination will be activated unless the self reaches out by an act of will to seek divine illumina-

tion. In the words of Maimonides: "It is a well-known fact that the thing which engages greatly and earnestly man's attention while he is awake and in the full possession of his senses forms during his sleep (or vision) the object of action of his imaginative faculty. Imagination is then influenced by the intellect insofar as it is predisposed for such influence" (*Guide*, II, 36).

The Rabbis appear to have shared this conviction. They suggest that God did not suddenly break in on Abraham to send him forth on his vocation to be a religious pioneer in civilization. Abraham had taken the first step. He had brooded on the nature of existence. By his own quest to understand the universe, he came to feel the insufficiency of existence without a divine Sovereign to account for the world's rationality and purposefulness or to assure the ultimate triumph of moral values against the pressure of the dark forces rampant in the world (*Bereshit Rabbah* 39:1). The divine influence needs a receptive vessel through whom to perform its work. It finds it in one who yearns for God, who cares deeply about the issues which involve righteousness and truth.

We have discussed some of the factors which equip the prophet for his calling, and these also equip other men to become "disciples" of the prophet by having their spirits ignited through exposure to the prophet's word, to see the divine light and to feel its impact on their lives. But the experience of divine illumination, in its primary and creative level, is not merely a matter of meeting preparatory requirements. It is by the grace of God, Maimonides reminds us, that the prophet becomes a prophet. Judaism has laid an obligation on every man to study the Torah. We can all become "disciples" or "children" of the prophets. We are all endowed with some intellectual and imaginative capacities, and these

will be further refined through education. We can all therefore become followers of the great masters, to study their teachings and to heed their admonitions. But prophets are not produced in an academy. They are produced in moments of mystery when a great soul has opened up to God and God has willed to bestow His grace on it by touching it with the divine fire.

There is no contradiction between the discovery of a historical dimension in the sacred texts of Scripture and the belief that they are disclosures of God's revelation. The human and the divine commingle in all of life. The farmer tills the soil, plants, weeds, harvests, but this does not contradict a dimension of divine providence at work in the same process of bringing food from the earth. For the farmer did not create the earth with its power to fructify the seed placed in its womb, he did not create the economy of nature on which his labor depends, he did not stuff the sun with energy, nor fill the clouds with rain, nor did he fashion the seed with its miraculous power to reproduce itself. Throughout nature we witness what is a cardinal belief in Judaism, that man is God's partner in the work of creation.

The partnership between God and man is similarly at work in bringing forth the truth on which our souls are nourished. Man receives a divine communication in the moment when the divine spirit rests on him, but man must give form to that communication; he must express it in words, in images, and in symbols which will make his message intelligible to other men. Out of this need to give form to the truth that is revealed to him the prophet places the stamp of his own individuality upon that truth. He draws upon his own experience, upon the idiom current in his time; he creates images that will be familiar to his people. Thus the truth becomes personal-

ized; it takes upon itself the robes of the world in which it is to enter to perform its work of moral and spiritual transformation. In the process of expression and transmission truth takes on a historical dimension, which the historian can examine by the tools of historical investigation, but all this in no way invalidates the role of the divine factor, the initial "breathing in" on the prophet of the message which he is called to proclaim to the people of his time.

A detailed study of the sacred texts of the Torah reveals both factors at work: the human, which is subject to historical inquiry, and the divine, which touches the mystery of God's continuing initiative in man's life. The prophet Jeremiah, for example, was a man of flesh and blood, and we can follow him as he plays his memorable part in the tense drama of his people's history. We can see how events impinge on him and how in turn he reacts to events and seeks to give them direction and shape. He is a historical figure whose life and work is in some respects an open book, open, that is, to those who understand the interrelations of the individual and the historical forces against which he functions. But Jeremiah also testifies to the element of mystery in his experience. He acknowledges that his ideas and the passion with which he stood witness to them did not originate with himself. He felt himself touched by a power beyond himself, a power greater than himself, whom he could not resist. Jeremiah's message to his people was unpopular, and it brought him grief, but he felt himself in the grip of God, and he could not be silent. As he put it in the stirring lines (Jeremiah 20:7-10):

O Lord, Thou hast enticed me and I was enticed,
Thou hast overcome me, and hast prevailed;
I am become a laughing stock all the day,

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Every one mocketh me.
For as often as I speak, I cry out,
I cry: "Violence and spoil";
Because the word of the Lord is made
A reproach unto me, and a derision, all the day.
And if I say: "I will not make mention of Him,
Nor speak any more of His name,"
Then there is in my heart as it were a burning fire
Shut up in my bones,
And I weary myself to hold it in,
But cannot.

The noted historian, Yehezkel Kaufmann, has written an imposing work of eight volumes on the origin of the Jewish religion. He has examined the latest findings in Biblical archeology, he has probed the evidence of comparative religion, he has studied the historical context of each major event in the development of the Jewish religion. His work has been hailed as a monumental contribution to the historical study of Biblical Judaism. But Kaufmann acknowledges that in addition to the historical dimension which may be examined by the usual canons of historical research, there remains a dimension which defies historical investigation. For the fact remains that the doctrine of monotheism, the belief in one God, with all its revolutionary implications for man's vision of himself and his destiny, arose among no other people than the Jews. He confesses that it is impossible to trace the roots of this belief to antecedent cultures. Other peoples lived under the same geographic and climatic conditions and confronted similar social, economic, and political pressures in their environment, but all remained within the basic presuppositions of paganism.

The belief in one God is a revolutionary, a new, an original

idea which broke upon the world through the medium of Israelite history. Kaufmann credits Moses with being the pioneer of this idea: "Moses saw the vision of the new idea (of the oneness of God) and he inspired a religious revolution among the Israelite tribes by planting this belief among them." But whence did Moses take this vision which broke fresh ground in the spiritual development of mankind? And what made the Israelite tribes so responsive to this idea that they entered into a covenant to make the service to this idea the dominant goal of their national life? Here, Kaufmann concedes, we stand on the threshold "of the ultimate mystery of all existence." He tells us, furthermore, that in the radical break of Biblical religion from all its surrounding civilizations we have the special manifestation of *hashgahah*, of divine providence, though as a historian he holds back from pursuing this insight which takes us out "of the sphere of empirical history" and takes us "into the sphere of faith."⁴

The choicest fruit of divine revelation is found in the Torah, or the Bible. The literal meaning of the term *Torah* is "instruction." Sometimes we speak of the "Written Torah" in contradistinction to the "Oral Torah." The latter consists of the various writings of the Talmudic age; they originated in the oral discussions in the academies of ancient Palestine and Babylonia, and they are for this reason called "Oral Torah," but in time the "Oral Torah" was also reduced to writing.

The "Oral Torah" is in the nature of a supplement to the "Written Torah," a kind of running commentary in which the Rabbis confront the teachings of the "Written Torah" in the light of the experiences of their day and endeavor to use the

⁴ Yehezkel Kaufmann: *Toledot Ha-Emunah Ha-Yisraelit* (Tel-Aviv: Devir, 1960), Vol. I, pp. 35, 38, 39.

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teachings of the "Written Torah" as the directing principles by which to order life in their own time.

Jewish tradition holds the "Oral Torah" sacred too, and it deems the teachers who created it to have been divinely inspired. But the foundation of the "Oral Torah" as well as of all other developments in Judaism is the "Written Torah," what we call the Bible.

The Hebrew Bible is an anthology of thirty-nine individual books, which have often been grouped into three major categories. The first is the Pentateuch, or the five Books of Moses. This is the earliest layer in Jewish tradition. It sets forth the teachings of Moses as to how the Israelites were to conduct themselves in order to realize the goal of becoming "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." The most important of these teachings was the belief in one God and the duty to serve Him in deeds of justice, mercy, and love. There is a historical section in these books, charting the birth of the Israelite tribes, their sufferings in Egypt, their redemption, and their union as a people pledged by a covenant to serve the one God, the Creator of the universe, the Lord of history, and their own Redeemer and Lawgiver. Prefacing these narratives is an account of the creation of the world, the origins of human life, and man's slow groping to understand the nature of good and evil, of sin, guilt, suffering, and death.

The second category into which the Biblical books are grouped is the writings of the prophets. These include the various historical books like Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings, which are included among the prophetic books because they reflect the prophetic philosophy of history and the prophetic emphasis on faithfulness to God and justice between man and man as the basis of national health and prosperity.

The third category combines the various other writings not

included in the previous two categories. It embraces the great texts of the so-called "wisdom" literature, books like Proverbs and Job, the books of Esther, Ecclesiastes, the Song of Songs, Lamentations, Ruth, the Psalms, and the Chronicles.

A term has been coined from the initial letters of the Hebrew names for each of these categories to serve as an aid to memory; the term is *TaNaKh*, the *T* standing for *Torah* (the most restricted use of the term Torah limits it to the five books of Moses), the *N* for *Nevi'im*, or prophets, and *K* for *Ketuvim*, or (miscellaneous) writings.

The Bible is both a human and a divine work. Its particular formulations bear upon themselves the marks of the world in which it took shape and of the individual minds and hearts of those who were its human creators. But from every particular formulation there also shines through the light of the divine truth which is above time and circumstance. We face an unending quest to recognize the timeless element in the Torah in order to give it newer incarnation in forms appropriate for our time. It is a quest which begins with *study*, and the study of the Torah is indeed one of the primary obligations of a Jew. Ben Bag-Bag is quoted in the *Ethics of the Fathers* (5:25) as having phrased this obligation thus: "Study the Torah again and again, for everything is in it, yea, grow old and gray in it, but do not swerve from it, for there is no greater virtue than this."

What role does the land play in the design for man's illumination and redemption?

A culture cannot flourish in a vacuum. The visions of goodness and truth which are at the heart of the Biblical message to man require embodiment in the fabric of social institutions.

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A people committed to these visions, to bear witness to them in word and deed, to exemplify them in a pattern of life, requires space and time within which to do its work. Time is the ever-renewed creation of life; it is the unfolding of the unfinished structure of existence. But space is part of what God finished with the original launching of the world. And a people, to fulfill its destiny, must be rooted somewhere in space, which becomes the theater for its labors in fulfillment of its inner essence, by which it will play its part in civilization.

The "space" linked with the destiny of the Jewish people is *Eretz Yisrael*, the land of Israel. Here was the theater of greatest confrontation between God and the Jewish people. Here were uttered the great words of prophecy, and here was fashioned the national laboratory where the great visions of Judaism were to be embodied in the fabric of social life. There were moments in the Jewish confrontation with God outside of *Eretz Yisrael*, such as Sinai and Babylon, but Sinai was colored by the anticipation of the settlement in *Eretz Yisrael* and Babylon by the memories of life in *Eretz Yisrael* and the hope of the return to it.

Is there something intrinsic to that land which made it especially conducive to be the scene of the great spiritual labors of the Jewish people? Ellsworth Huntington of Yale University has argued that there is a correlation between geography, climate, and the land's topography and the quality of civilization that may arise on it. The fact, however, is that *this* land played no such role during the long centuries that other peoples occupied it. It is in the conjunction of the people of Israel and the Land of Israel that the momentous spiritual development we call Judaism took form. This conjunction has created a *memory* in the Jewish people which invested the

land with endearment. Association of this land with the creative epoch in the Jewish quest for holiness proclaimed this land as the Holy Land.

The love of the Jewish people for *Eretz Yisrael* appears to have been fully reciprocated. The land yielded her best when tended by Jewish hands. When the Jews were banished from the land, the land became a wilderness. Other peoples occupied this land, but throughout these occupations the land remained desolate and barren, as though refusing to yield of herself to strangers who did not belong to her.

The belief that God had destined the Holy Land to be the home of the Jewish people, and the scene of its major service to God's kingdom, was challenged by the historic tragedy of exile and the disabilities which came upon the Jewish people as a result of it. Jews never left the Holy Land altogether. Small settlements of Jews persisted in different parts of the country, and they were joined by pilgrims from time to time. But they existed in a moribund state, socially stagnant and economically unproductive, depending for the most part on alms contributed by the pious in Jewish communities throughout the world. But the bulk of the Jewish people lived in banishment from the land, dispersed among all nations, in all countries of the world.

The problem was a problem for Jewish as well as Christian theology. For how account for God's acquiescence in this tragedy? How account for God's willingness to hide His face from His chosen and permit them to suffer dispersion and persecution? Christian theology, and to some extent Jewish theology as well, answered this question in the manner of Job's friends, who sought to account for God's apparent acquiescence in his personal suffering. They accepted the conventional proposition that suffering is necessarily a sign of guilt,

of divine rejection. Christian theology assumed that God had rejected Israel, replacing her with the Church. Israel's guilt was her rejection of Jesus as the savior. The logic was clear—a precondition for her restoration was her conversion to the new faith. Jewish teachers defined Jewish guilt in other terms, terms that reflect the emphasis on the moral deed, which is characteristic of Judaism. The first Temple was destroyed, according to the Talmud, because of the sins of idolatry, unchastity, and bloodshed, but the second Temple was destroyed “for the sin of needless hatred between man and man, which teaches us that hatred between man and man is equal to the sins of idolatry, unchastity, and bloodshed” (Yoma 9a).

The Christian view of Israel's exile confirmed Christian otherworldliness, for it tended to reinforce the conviction that faith in Jesus was the indispensable and sufficient condition for winning God's grace. The Jewish definition of guilt was calculated to strengthen the effort toward moral penitence, but it also tended to suggest that moral cleansing in itself would create the redemption. Envisioned in both interpretations was a conception of divine providence which eclipsed human initiative in the direct redress of the condition of exile. Exile was deemed to have been God's direct judgment against Israel. The redemption would occur when the guilt was expiated, and it would come through the direct intervention of God.

The intuition which led the author of Job to challenge the smug assumption that suffering is always associated with guilt was also reflected in another interpretation of Israel's exile. Rabbinic Judaism knew that suffering is at times a token of God's love. In a world dominated by greed and the lust for power, a man may suffer in innocence. Indeed, he may suffer because he stands as a witness to a moral standard higher than

the one prevalent, which may evoke resistance precisely because it is higher. To be called to serve as such a witness is a token of privilege; it is a token of God's love. The martyrdom of the Christians who were thrown to the lions in the Roman arena was the mark of their challenge to Roman paganism, not of their guilt. The prophet Isaiah gave this interpretation to Israel's suffering. Israel was the suffering servant of the Lord. The world judged him guilty because he suffered, without realizing that his suffering was the mark not of *his* guilt but of the world's, that he suffered because he was a witness to God's word, and that the need of expiation rested primarily not on him but on those who had aggrieved him.

Rabbinic Judaism did not withdraw the Jew from guilt in the historic tragedy of their dispersion, and it was a moral triumph that this was not done. But the Rabbis were sufficiently realistic to point to Roman imperialism as the aggressor. God is often pictured as grieving for His children driven into exile, for His shrine reduced to ruins. But history is not made by the divine purpose alone; the divine plan is blunted by human actions and reactions. Having trusted man to a condition of freedom, God has limited His own freedom to intervene in the direction of history. The predatory empire was, therefore, free to follow the lure of empire and to subjugate small peoples. The victim, for the good of his soul, must probe for some share in his own suffering, for some blunder and folly of his own part that may have contributed to his own misfortune. But the redress needed is contingent primarily on the defeat of the evil empire and resistance to the conditions created by its aggression.

The redemption for which Israel's teachers hoped involved, therefore, a moral transformation on two levels. It involved Israel's penitence, to expiate the measure of guilt which it bore

for its own sufferings, and it involved a moral change in the world through the destruction of the evil kingdom and the conversion of the world from the pursuit of the false goals of power to the goals of a new world order based on the love of God and man. This was the substance of the Jewish vision of the messianic age when "the world would be perfected under the kingdom of the Almighty." The dream had, of course, also a more specifically Jewish dimension, the return of the Jewish people to Zion.

The state of the world envisioned in this consummation was characterized as a world in which justice has been established to a degree enabling "the wolf and the lamb" to dwell together in safety. The weaker, in other words, will no longer need to fear the predatory designs of the strong, for all will be moved to dwell in peaceful coexistence. In that new age as pictured by the prophet (Isaiah 11:7) "the lion will eat straw like the ox," which is a hyperbolic way of saying that the fiercer aspects of the natural order itself will be overcome. The strong will shed their aggressiveness and live with their neighbors by the values of humaneness and mutual respect.

The hope for redemption was a precious seed preserved in the Jewish heart, and in due time it has born a noble fruit. Out of it sprang the Zionist movement and eventually the new state of Israel. But the birth of the State of Israel has not received complete acceptance in the world. In some Christian circles the rebirth of Israel has been found embarrassing because of the Christian dogma that the Jews had been rejected by God and superseded by the "new" Israel, the Church. But there are also some Jewish groups that have shown hostility to the State of Israel.

A segment of the Jewish community, small in numbers but aggressive in the advocacy of its views, has attacked the

Zionist movement and the State of Israel as an attempted usurpation of divine prerogative. Interpreting divine providence in terms eclipsing human initiative, this group has denounced Israel as the creation of human pride and godlessness. They deemed it sacrilegious for man to actively work for his redemption. They asked that the Jewish people wait for the messiah. The only work to hasten his coming was to be a work of prayer and penitence, to merit God's mercy. Some of them, the *Neturay Karta*, live in Israel but have continued to refuse recognition of the State; they have shown their hostility in various forms of passive resistance. A small group of their associates live in the United States, and it is from them that much of the anti-Israel propaganda has emanated. This group deems itself superorthodox, but its theology must be judged a distortion of classic Judaism, which has called on man to be God's partner in the work of creation. In the work of redemption, too, man must be a co-worker with the Eternal.

The exaggerated emphasis of God's providence has always been a problem of religion. It has inspired resistance to every form of human initiative in the creative shaping of life. It has even led its followers to reject the benefits of medical science on the ground that man is called on to submit to God's will and not to try subverting it by the techniques of his own devising. It becomes as mischievous to eclipse man as it is to eclipse God from the process of history.

From the perspective of religion, all existential realities are of ambivalent character. The community shares in the limitations which characterize the individual; it is an instance of creaturely existence which is necessarily enmeshed in deficiency. In meeting the problems of historical existence, every community is bound to err. The exercise of statecraft involves

the use of power, and power may be abused. A community, like an individual, must, therefore, see itself continually as under moral judgment.

The moral perils which confront the State of Israel, like all other states, in its actions of contingent historical judgment have led some to decry the Zionist movement and the State of Israel born under its sponsorship as a diversion from the purely spiritual concerns which should preoccupy the Jewish people. The American Council for Judaism has stubbornly opposed the State of Israel because it wants the Jewish community to function on a purely spiritual or religious plane, because it sees the moral compromises of statecraft repugnant to the spiritual life.

But the same dilemma faces the individual. There is no one so righteous as to be without sin. Shall we, therefore, conclude that existence is evil, that it would be better if we had never been born? To be is often to err, yet it is a privilege to be, for only by being can we know and serve God. The fact that we sometimes speak folly does not argue that it were better if we were without the power of speech. A state can err, and it needs to be judged so as to make it conscious of the moral perils which confront it always, but its existence in a state of freedom is good, for it is enabled to do the positive things by which a people functions creatively in the world.

This, at any rate, is the distinguishing mark of the Jewish religion. It is positively oriented toward historical existence. It regards the pursuits of mundane existence as part of the ground where God tests man and where man meets his commitments to God. Here he can create the fabric of social life, establish justice, create conditions of freedom, organize the energies that will subdue nature to human goals, fulfilling the

mandate which derives from the awareness that the Lord did not create the world to be a waste, but that He formed it to be inhabited.

The attitude of Judaism to the historical community flowed in part from the genius of Judaism which sees the secular as only a lower rung in the ladder by which man ascends to God. It flowed also from the circumstance that Jewish teachers encountered God's revelation within the context of the Jewish people and its history. It would be difficult to write a purely secular history of the Jewish people, as it would be difficult to write a purely religious one. The two stand suffused. The Jewish people was the ground of revelation and the laboratory for its human fulfillment. The people's exile, therefore, took on an aspect of catastrophe in the religious scheme of things, and its restoration was the hope cherished as an article of religious faith. "Next year in Jerusalem" became the affirmation which culminated every great celebration in the Jewish calendar, from the *Seder* on Passover to the *Ne'ilah* service in the synagogue on the Day of Atonement.

The convergence of the secular and the religious poses certain problems in a democratic society. For we do not live in compact, religiously homogeneous human communities. The conditions of modern life imposes upon us the need of sharing in the life of a democratic society with others who affirm a differing religious faith or none at all, and our religion must become an optional association in a voluntary community. This is reflected in the State of Israel as it is reflected in other democratic societies. Israel, created by the Jewish people as part of its struggle for redemption, is by the terms of its own constitutional definition a democracy, which guarantees freedom of all religions. Christian and Moslem sects of every persuasion are not only permitted to pursue their religion

freely, but receive various forms of state help and encouragement.

There is only one area of social life which the State of Israel has left in the hands of the religious authorities, the law of personal status, including marriage, divorce, and inheritance. The Jewish, Christian, and Islamic religious communities administer this aspect of public life for their respective adherents. This practice was originally introduced by the British mandatory power, and it has been continued into the fabric of the new state.

Given the integral relation between religion and people which exists in Judaism, many problems are bound to arise in a Jewish state. There are natural pressures from religious authorities who want to see religion ever more fully embodied in the life of the state, and there are the pressures to keep the state from becoming a theocracy, to preserve the basis of its democratic character. This tension exists in various forms in all societies, especially those which acknowledge the need of religion in life and at the same time stand committed to religious freedom as an aspect of their democracy. The resolution of these, as of other problems, involves contingent judgments, which are bound to be sometimes mistaken. But it is the virtue of a democratic society that it is open to criticism and correction. The process of criticism and correction is vibrantly alive in contemporary Israel.

The relationship between religion and the state is a subject of special delicacy for Jews who live outside the state of Israel. From time immemorial there was a Jewish diaspora, and Jews lived by the dictum of the Talmudist Samuel (Nedarim 28a): "The law of the state is the law." A person who meets the commitments of living has many loyalties. One of these loyalties is to the state, expressed in terms of the obligations

of citizenship. The Jew knows only one citizenship, that of the state in which he resides. His loyalty to the United States, if he lives in the United States, is unhyphenated, unshared, in the political sense. But there are other loyalties which a person has besides those to the state. There is the loyalty to the Kingdom of God which, though not yet a reality, imposes obligations on those who know a commitment toward its emergence. Loyalty to God, in both the Jewish as well as the American tradition, ranks higher than the loyalty we owe to the state.

The ties of the Jew in the diaspora with Israel are not political ties. They are ties born of a shared past with the people who created it. They are ties born of the knowledge that through the State of Israel the Jewish people has reappeared as a historical community to serve historical ends latent in its life.

In this role of historical service Jews outside of Israel can also play an honorable role. They can share in the material aspects of the labor of redemption. They can serve as a bridge linking Israel with the larger world, to assist in the dialogue of minds between Israel and the world community.

Integrated with the national life of another people, moreover, Jews in the diaspora will be able to draw strength from their revitalized religion to serve more effectively within the society of which they are part. They will serve, that is, in a spiritual sense, as the carriers of the commitment to perfect the world under the Kingdom of the Almighty.

From a religious perspective, the emergence of the State of Israel and its work of rehabilitating the homeless of the Jewish people must be judged as a positive event of the greatest importance. The more than two million Jews living in the State of Israel are like brands plucked from the fire. They

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represent several layers of immigration. The layer of early pioneers left the scene of eventual catastrophe in the early decades of this century. They would have been engulfed by the brown terror of Nazism, or the red terror of Communism, which has decreed its own doom upon the Jewish people. The red terror does not practice genocide as did the Nazis, but it has engaged in the systematic effort to destroy Jewish religious values. Even a calendar of the Jewish festivals may not be freely distributed to Jews in the Soviet Union, for that regime is embarked on the attempt to extirpate every attachment to Judaism from the Jewish masses who reside in its territory.

The most important segment of the latter immigration consisted of the graduates of Hitler's death camps, the remnant that was miraculously spared from the crematoria and the gas chambers. The act of saving a single person, say the Rabbis, is equivalent in merit to the saving of the whole world. Out of a single person, according to Scripture, all of humanity has sprung, for a person is also all the generations yet unborn who are destined to derive from him. The State of Israel has saved countless lives, countless worlds, and one to whom life is sacred will hail the record of rescue as a great spiritual triumph in which all men must rejoice.

We are indebted to Israel for having rescued those who survive, but also for having given dignity to the death of those who died. Israel gave a voice to the dead of the holocaust in the Eichmann trial, and in various other contexts, to confront the world with the enormity of the crime perpetrated by some and acquiesced in by others through silence, or through the callous refusal to act for their rescue, or through gestures of concern, little and belated and certainly not commensurate with the enormity of the moral chal-

lenge which the Nazis flaunted at the world. Israel gave a voice not only to the Jewish dead, but to all who have died, including the thousands of gypsies, exterminated in the same program of genocide, for whom no one else has spoken.

The rebirth of the Jewish people in Israel has brought other gains which a religiously sensitive person must deem important. It has enabled us to reconstruct the historical context in which the great moments of Judaism as well as Christianity had their being. The renaissance of the Hebrew language, the recovery of ancient texts, the rescue of ancient monuments from the rubble of the centuries, the return of life to ancient sites—these have shed precious light on the world of the Bible, and they will give us the means for a clearer understanding of the miracle of prophecy and of the permanent lessons which it speaks to man.

God's word is a universal word. The core of its meaning addresses itself to all men, in all the circumstances of time and place. Nevertheless, it has been God's will to select certain people for special vocations. It has been His will similarly to select certain places as the sites especially conducive for His self-revelation. Judaism attaches a dimension of holiness to the land with which it has been linked by the most creative epochs in its history. Certainly the memories formed by the encounter between this people and this land, when stirred to action, will release a great spiritual momentum. The future is born in the womb of memory and of hope. The memory and the hope which cluster around the land we call holy is promising of a great new chapter in history, to unfold as the people take root again in its soil and feel free to listen to the still small voice of the Eternal speaking to its soul.

A thousand years in God's sight are but as yesterday when

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it is past. Man is brief of days, and he cannot allow himself to judge events from the perspective of the Eternal. He must, therefore, moderate his judgments, knowing that his view is finite, fractional, and often erring. The State of Israel celebrated in 1963 its fifteenth birthday. What are fifteen years even in man's sight? It would be foolish to assess the significance of Israel by the record of fifteen years, though the record is an impressive one. A religious man judges his world not only in terms of the record but also in terms of his faith, in terms of his hopes for the future.

Jewish teachers saw their people as the carriers of a great purpose, to serve as a witness to God's word, to bear the seeds out of which will come the world's perfection under the kingdom of the Almighty. But exile and suffering had impaired Israel's capacity to serve effectively in the cause of its mission. Jews have often lived a creative life even in the period of dispersion, but they could not express the fullest spiritual potential in their nature. Their power to create was blunted by the circumstances of their existence. The material and the spiritual are not autonomous realms; the material is a base on which the spiritual grows, and in turn the spiritual is the form that shapes the material toward beauty and truth.

When the violin is impaired dissonance appears in the song which is played on it, and when the violin is broken the song becomes silent. The circumstances of Jewish life under persecution and dispersion impeded the Jewish people from pursuing their spiritual preoccupation. The Jews became in part defensive, preoccupied with the problems of survival, rather than with the tasks of redeeming the world from paganism and idolatry. This has been part of the Jewish dream, to be reborn in freedom, that freedom might create the conditions

for the renewal of God's song, which by the mystery of God's providence it has been given to Israel to sing with singular clarity for the sake of all men.

Judaism does not see itself as a light that has been spent. It deems the covenant sealed at Sinai as still valid. Her daughter religions have sometimes proclaimed themselves as the new Israel, heirs to her ancient prerogatives. From a Jewish point of view this is but another instance of children claiming their inheritance while the parent is still very much alive. Judaism, on the other hand, welcomes her daughter religions as aids in the great labor to which it is committed by the Sinaitic covenant. They are, in the words of Maimonides, cited previously, "forerunners" of the final messianic consummation; their role is to pave the way for the true redemption which is yet to come, by communicating the message of prophetic religion to places and to peoples Judaism by itself has been unable to reach. It is not the hope of Judaism to convert the world to itself in a formal sense, but to convert the world to the universal ideal of the love of God and man, within the institutional structure of the existing faiths. In this labor it is to serve its daughter religions as well. It will do so by witnessing to the purity of the prophetic faith, against its corruption under Hellenistic syncretism, which has often blunted the monotheistic vision and converted religion from a way of redeeming man *within* the world into a way of redeeming him *from* the world.

God has not concluded His word. We believe that many new words are destined to be spoken by Him. We believe that prophecy will flourish again, and we believe that the Jewish people will be privileged to make a contribution toward its dissemination in the world. Maimonides said (*Guide*, II, 36): "Our sages say, 'Inspiration does not come upon a prophet

when he is sad or languid.' . . . The same circumstance, prevalence of sadness and dullness, were undoubtedly the direct cause of the interruption of prophecy during the exile. Such an evil state has been prophesied to us in the words (Amos 8:12, Lamentations 2:9), 'They shall turn to and fro and seek the word of God, but shall not find it'; 'Her king and her princes are among the nations, the law is no more, her prophets also find no vision from the Lord.' This is a real fact, and the cause is evident; the prerequisites have been lost. In the messianic period—may it soon commence—prophecy will therefore again be in our midst, as he has been promised by God." Our dream is of a heavenly Jerusalem, of great visions, of great truths to stir the mind, of great ideals to stir the heart. But the earthly Jerusalem must be built first. The earthly is a stepping stone to the heavenly.

This vision of the spiritual promise in the return of Israel to the Holy Land has been portrayed with particular fervor by Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook. "Through the revival of Israel in the Holy Land there will come a spiritual renewal, and divine thoughts, vigorous and pure, will appear in the household of Jacob to contribute toward the purification of the religious spirit of the entire world. This in turn will make for the purification of the spiritual state of the individual person and of society. . . . The blessedness of prophecy in all its authenticity, in all its eternal splendor, its power and its pleasantness will make its way in the heart of a new generation truly enlightened and heroic, to proclaim peace and truth to all the nations under the heavens." ⁵

Jewish teachers refer to the State of Israel, in its present condition, as representing *at'halta di-ge'ulah*, the beginning of redemption. It is not the full redemption. The road to the full

⁵ Rabbi Kook: *Mishnat Ha-Rav* (Jerusalem: Bene Akiba; 1936), p. 6.

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redemption will come as the crowning good of a greater justice between races and nations, one that will harmonize the legitimate needs of each and enable all to join hands in the works of peace.

The State of Israel, by the commitments of the faith which nurtured its rebirth and by its own conscious dedication, cherishes the goal to serve the cause of the larger redemption. It is in this sense that the reappearance of Israel in freedom represents an incident in God's emergent purpose in history. It must be welcomed by those who see life in the religious dimension as a contribution to the vindication of their own faith in the future of man and his destiny.

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